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(HANSARD)

Monday, October 1, 2018

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 1, 2018

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

• (1100)

[*English*]

VACANCY

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely the Hon. Peter Van Loan, member for the electoral district of York—Simcoe, by resignation effective Sunday, September 30, 2018.

Pursuant to subsection 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

FILIPINO HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.) moved:

> That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize the contributions that Filipino-Canadians have made to Canadian society, the richness of the Filipino language and culture, and the importance of reflecting upon Filipino heritage for future generations by declaring June, every year, Filipino Heritage Month.

She said: I am privileged to rise today to move my private member's motion, Motion No. 155, which speaks to officially designating the month of June as Filipino heritage month across Canada from coast to coast to coast. I do this on behalf of a vibrant and dynamic Filipino Canadian community that is proud of its culture and heritage and equally proud of its new home, Canada, a community that makes immeasurable contributions to Canadian life from coast to coast to coast. This is borne out by the 2016 census from Statistics Canada, which shows Filipinos are the fastest growing ethnic group in Canada.

Since 2011, the population has grown by 27%, to 851,400. We will not just find Filipinos in major centres, such as Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal. There is a growing Filipino Canadian population in Whitehorse. Philippine ambassador to Canada, Petronila Garcia, told me about her recent visit to the Filipino community in Iqaluit. It is a little colder than what they would have been used to back in Manila, but they are helping this northern community grow and prosper.

Many Filipinos first come to Canada as caregivers, and there is no more important job than caring for seniors and children. They leave behind their families to care for our families in Canada. It is a sacrifice that is hard for many parents to contemplate, but it speaks to just how strong their will is to build a better life for their families. We need to do more to bring these families together sooner.

Filipino Canadians are making a difference in all walks of life, from singers like *Canadian Idol* finalist Elena Juatco to athletes like soccer star Jonathan de Guzman. Rey Pagtakhan was the first Filipino Canadian MP and cabinet minister as a Liberal. The late senator Tobias Enverga was a champion for his community in the Senate as a Conservative. Florfina Marcelino was the first woman of colour elected in the Manitoba legislature, today serving as a New Democrat with her brother-in-law Ted.

It was a Filipino Canadian, Ariana Mari Cuvin of Toronto, who designed the Canada 150 logo. Another Filipino Canadian, Martina Ortiz-Luis, sang the new gender-neutral version of *O Canada* at this year's Canada Day celebration on Parliament Hill.

Filipino Canadians are proud Canadians. In my community of Scarborough, Filipino restaurants and Filipino culture are not hard to find. Restaurants such as Chef George, run by George Rivera, and Laguna Bay Filipino restaurant, run by Ruby Urriza, bring the taste of the Philippines to Canada. Also My riding is home to the first Jollibee's in the GTA, where the spicy chicken joy is proving to be a hit with everyone, not just homesick Filipinos.

A staple of the cultural community in Scarborough is the Scarborough Ontario Seniors Association, commonly known as SOSA, whose dancing and exercises are a highlight at many community events, including my annual community barbecue. The Filipino Centre, a key community hub offering support for seniors and students who work to keep the Tagalog language strong, recently located to Scarborough after many years of serving the Filipino community in downtown Toronto.

However, this community is more than just dancing and delicious foods.

Community leader Tony San Juan is a teacher and professor. He worked as a welder to make ends meet when he first came to Canada before obtaining his credentials and returning to education, where he has won awards for his contributions.

Businessman Mel Galeon owned a bakery in Quezon when he came to Canada. He and his wife Flor Vendiola began making Filipino pastries, which they sold at many community events. They grew this business into FV Foods, a household name with several grocery stores in the GTA.

Rolly Mangante used to work at the Philippine consulate general office in Toronto and later became an unofficial ambassador for Filipino culture. After retirement, he founded the Philippine Cultural Community Centre and was instrumental in creating Taste of Manila, the annual street extravaganza of Filipino culture and food that attracts people from across North America to Toronto.

● (1105)

Norma Carpio is a long-time advocate for Filipino Canadians. She spearheaded having the Philippines as a feature country at the CNE in 1998 and led the Philippine Independence Day Council, known as PIDC, which organizes an annual celebration of the Philippine national day. She has organized many events and is always a key fundraiser when natural disasters strike the Philippines, working to help those in need.

Monina Lim Serrano was president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce, Toronto, and has served the community on the Toronto Police Services Board and the College of Nurses Ontario. She was appointed Ontario business ambassador by former Ontario Premier Mike Harris and was part of former prime minister Jean Chrétien's team Canada trade mission to the Philippines.

I could go on and on. The Filipino people have a rich and vibrant history and culture, and are making outstanding contributions to Canada. It is past due that we recognize the contributions of this community with its own heritage month, celebrating Filipino heritage month across Canada.

After much consultation with the community, we choose the month of June because, on June 12, the Philippines celebrate its independence day. On June 12, 1898, revolutionary leader Emilio Aguinaldo proclaimed the independence of the Philippines from Spanish rule. A number of other cities across Canada, including the city of Toronto, have also already recognized June as Filipino heritage month.

I would like to thank the many people who have offered their support for Motion No. 155, since I first announced its introduction, and who have worked hard in their communities to build support with petitions and have pursued similar initiatives in their towns and cities.

A Filipino Canadian councillor in Kitimat, British Columbia, Edwin Empinado, was an early supporter of Motion No. 155. He spearheaded a motion at Kitimat city council in February, declaring that the District of Kitimat supported Motion No. 155. I thank Edwin and Mayor Phil Germuth for their leadership on this.

In Montreal, city councillor Marvin Rotrand worked to pass a Filipino heritage month motion at Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce borough council in February. The local Filipino community came together for highly successful celebrations this past June.

Today, I would also like to recognize Narima Dela Cruz, who helped to gather hundreds of petition signatures in her community of Surrey, B.C. in support of Motion No. 155.

There is truly support for this motion and for this recognition for Filipino Canadian heritage from across Canada, from coast to coast to coast. Next year marks the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Canada and the Philippines. What better way to recognize this milestone than to officially recognize June as Filipino heritage month across Canada.

I urge all my colleagues to support the motion and to join me next June for the first national celebration of Filipino heritage month.

Mabuhay Canada. *Mabuhay* Philippines.

● (1110)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her initiative in bringing this before the House. I also welcome her back to the House of Commons. It is great to see her refreshed.

With respect to the question around the motion, one that I truly support, I know the member has done tremendous work at our committee as well. Many caregivers are from the Filipino community. They work hard to have their permanent resident status finalized in Canada. Some of them are having great difficulties.

Would the member honour the Filipino community, particularly the caregivers, by advocating for their cases to see their permanent resident status finalized in Canada?

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her advocacy for our caregivers. I duly recognize the work our caregivers are doing here for our kids, parents and seniors. I have always been a strong advocate for them and will continue to be a strong advocate to make sure that we can reunite their families in Canada as soon as possible.

● (1115)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are wholeheartedly behind this motion. In Barrie—Innisfil, we have a very proud Filipino community, which is moving up to almost 3,000 people at this point. They have been quite concerned about the devastation from the recent typhoons in the Philippines. There are fundraisers going on. I know that my colleague from Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte is very active, as I am, with the Filipino community.

I would like to ask the hon. member how many Filipino members are in her community and about the contributions they make where she lives.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his support for the Filipino community. I am very proud to represent over 14,000 Filipinos in my community. Filipino communities are making a difference in all walks of life. They have a rich and vibrant history and culture and are making an outstanding contribution to Canada. From restaurants to different community events, this community has always been there to embrace Canadian values.

Mr. John Oliver (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my community of Oakville, I have a very strong and robust Filipino community. The community has an annual picnic, and I have learned first-hand just how wonderful the food is. Everyone shows up for that picnic, and it is a great time to sit and enjoy some Filipino food, but also the company, the joy and the celebration the community is so excellent at.

In my previous life, I worked in a hospital. I have often said to people that some of the best nurses in that hospital, because of their empathy, love and high professional skills, are Filipino.

Has the member experienced that caregiving aspect of the Filipino community in her riding, and could she reflect on the importance of that kind of diversity in our Canadian culture?

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member. Filipinos play an important role in all walks of life. Because of some health challenges, I was at Sunnybrook hospital for over a month, and 90% of the nurses there who took care of me were from the Philippines. The love and support they give to people when they need it is amazing. It is time we recognized the contributions of Filipino Canadians and recognized June as Filipino heritage month so that we can celebrate the rich cultural diversity of this great community.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how significant is this motion going to be for the Filipino community that we have and enjoy in Canada?

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Mr. Speaker, support for this motion would be consistent with our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which officially recognizes multiculturalism as a Canadian value, and the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, which is built on a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed my pleasure to rise and speak to this motion. I would like to thank the member for Scarborough Centre for bringing forward this motion, which all of us completely support.

Before I start, I would like to pay tribute to my former colleague, Senator Tobias Enverga, the first Filipino Canadian senator, who was ultimately dubbed the pride of the Philippines in this Parliament. We will continue to miss him.

For 21 years, the Filipino community in my riding has been my strongest supporter. I would like to mention to my hon. colleague that she forgot to mention Calgary when she mentioned every other city. We have a very dynamic community in Calgary, and I have been lucky enough to be honoured and privileged to have this strong support. As a matter of fact, I am considered an honorary Filipino in my community.

I would like to recognize a few of the great Filipinos in my riding who have supported and continue working for the community: Ernie Amante; Elvie Valeroso; Roselyn Bernardo; Bill Bernardo; Melba Buenaventura; and most important, the Diamond Seniors Club, which every year hosts a lot of festivals for seniors. I am always honoured and privileged to be invited to its functions. As everyone has said unanimously in this House, every time a Filipino festival is held, it is full of joy and laughter.

Let me say, as my hon. colleague mentioned, that in 2015, the Filipino community became the largest community of permanent residents in this country. As a matter of fact, when I accompanied former prime minister Harper on his visit to the Philippines, he mentioned that Tagalog is the fastest-growing language in Canada.

As I have stated, the Filipino contribution to our country is immense, and we are extremely happy that it forms a part of the great multi-ethnic mosaic of Canada.

I made two other visits to the Philippines during my tenure as the parliamentary secretary for Foreign Affairs. One of the most notable events I want to bring to members' attention is that there is a community housing project called Telus-GK Village, just outside Manila. It is funded by the Telus Corporation, which is a telecommunications company. It is a great Canadian corporation involved in development projects. I have been to this village, and I see great happiness and children enjoying the facilities Telus has provided.

● (1120)

In 2012, CAE, another great Canadian success story, from Montreal, built an aircraft simulator for Cebu airlines. I had the opportunity to be at the opening ceremony with former president Aquino. We put a time capsule there to be opened in 100 years' time, and my name is there as Canada's representative. As I like telling my Filipino supporters, I am in the soil of the Philippines for the next 100 years.

As I said, we can look anywhere in Canada, in rural Alberta and elsewhere, and we will find Filipino workers. They are recognized as the best workers. During my visit to the Philippines, many Canadian companies were there recruiting Filipinos to come to work. They are hard-working people. I personally have this knowledge, because I have assisted many of them with their permanent residency in our country, and I will continue to do that. Aside from the fact that they make a great contribution, and examples have been given of their hard work and success, they form part of our multi-ethnic country.

Being an honorary Filipino, I always find it a pleasure to go to their festivals. It is great to see the people dancing and singing and the great Filipino culture. Their personalties have great warmth. They embrace the rest of the world, which is a strength of this country. This is why everywhere around the world, whether it is the Middle East, southeast Asia or Hong Kong, Filipinos are some of the most coveted workers. They have come to Canada as nannies. They now come and work in the service industry. Around the world, Filipinos are always welcomed as workers because of their strength.

When I was visiting the Philippines, its minister said that Filipinos living overseas are some of the greatest contributors back to their own country to help develop it, and after its independence, it continues to develop.

The Philippines is also a great partner of Canada in the ASEAN. I attended the ASEAN conference in the Philippines and have seen the contributions made by the Philippines around the world. On many occasions, we have had the opportunity to meet its foreign minister to talk to him about the United Nations.

We are extremely honoured and delighted that Filipinos make such a great contribution to our country. I could go on naming what they have done and continue to do in building our country, and for that I would like to thank this great community very much. I am honoured and privileged to have the title of honorary Filipino in my riding and to have had their support 21 years ago when I first started on this political journey. For that I am very grateful to them.

I want to thank the member for Scarborough Centre for bringing this motion forward. I think there will be unanimous consent for this motion in the House for their great contribution.

● (1125)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I provide my voice in support of Motion No. 155, which is a motion to designate the month of June Filipino heritage month.

It is a pleasure to see the member for Scarborough Centre, who moved this motion, back in the House of Commons and in full action. We have sat together on the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration for some time now. The motion before us today speaks to that committee's work as well.

The Filipino Canadian community is one of the fastest growing groups in Canada. The 2016 census estimated over 800,000 Canadians identified that they are of Filipino descent.

The Philippines has consistently been a top source country for newcomers to Canada for years. In 2016, it was the number one source country with over 40,000 new permanent residents to Canada. Large, vibrant and flourishing communities have been established in Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Calgary and my home city of Vancouver.

In my time in municipal, provincial and now federal politics, I have had the opportunity to engage with Vancouver's Filipino community and now with communities across the country.

To say that this community contributes to Canadian society would be a massive understatement. Filipino organizations such as Migrante Canada, which now has six provincial chapter organizations, advocate tirelessly for the right and dignity of Canada's migrant workers.

In my riding of Vancouver East, we also have the west coast domestic workers' association. As well, there is Vancouver's singing nannies, which brings together Filipino caregivers in Canada who put on shows and build ties within the community. They help to reduce homesickness for the many Filipino caregivers here in Canada who are far away from their original homes and from their families.

Much of the Filipino community's human rights and work stems from their own community's experience and that is what I would really like to focus on today.

When I rose in question period last week, I asked the Prime Minister about addressing the need for a national, affordable, accessible and high-quality child care program in Canada. The lack of such a program has forced families to navigate a patchwork of options, not all equally accessible or effective for their needs.

For a large number of families here, hiring a caregiver from the Philippines is their best option.

I have had the honour of working with and getting to know personally Filipino caregivers from across the country. Their dedication to their work, to their community and to their family is truly inspiring. However what our immigration system subjects them to is an injustice.

Under the old live-in caregiver program, we forced Filipino women to come to Canada, leave their families behind, live in the home of their employer and work for at least two years before they could apply for permanent resident status and reunite with their family here in Canada.

Caregivers in Canada are treated differently from any other stream of economic migrants in that respect. Filipino caregivers must jump through more hoops and cannot bring their family with them at the outset.

The live-in caregiver program was ended after far too many stories of employer abuse and hardship were made known to the public.

Despite knowing about the systemic hardships involved in the program and the risk of abuse, thousands of Filipino women left their families in the Philippines to come to Canada to care for our families, hoping that one day, after all their hard work, they would be able to secure a better life for their own children by finally reuniting with them here.

Tragically, their PR applications were not given much priority in terms of processing efforts or immigration levels plan space. As a result, an application backlog was created and swelled to tens of thousands. That meant that for thousands of caregivers in Canada, in addition to having to wait two years to even apply, it would take years before an application would be decided.

I met caregivers who, due to these unjust delays, were separated from their families for nearly 10 years. They missed life's milestones. They missed graduations. Relationships and marriages broke down. Loved ones passed away. All while they waited.

In addition to those hardships, they had to keep paying to renew their work permits and they had to keep paying for their family members to have their medical exams done.

They had to continue to respond to IRCC on time, but IRCC did not have that same responsibility to respond to them. In some cases, children aged out of the system. That is, by the time the application finalized, the dependent children were too old to be considered dependants. Families were permanently broken up by our system's backlogs.

Since getting a true sense of this issue I have been taking on live-in caregiver applications from across Canada and my office continues to advocate tirelessly for their completion.

● (1130)

I was pleased to see that the minister announced that 80% of the backlog would be clear by the end of this year, but at the same time I was heartbroken. It means that for 20% of those families, there will be another Christmas apart. It does not matter how many stories I hear, because I can never really imagine what that feels like. However, these women are so strong. In the face of all of this hardship, they continue to be some of the most dedicated, optimistic people I have ever met. The hope of bringing their family together keeps them going.

The current caregivers program, caring for children and caring for high medical needs, has seen improvements to the system, but it has also put in place additional hoops that caregivers must jump through to stay. The minister quietly had the department post online notice that these programs would be ending next year. I have questioned the minister in this place on what plan there is to replace these programs. It is still unclear.

It is my hope that all members of this House support the motion before us today to recognize the contributions and heritage of the Filipino Canadian community. However, it is also my opinion that to truly recognize those contributions, we must work together to put in place a just caregiver immigration stream, one that recognizes that if they are good enough to work here, they are good enough to stay. That means permanent residence on arrival, a stream that has in mind the best interests of not just the employer's family but of the employee's family as well. That means ending the forced separation of caregivers from their families. Let us not just recognize the contributions of the Filipino community to our country; let us commit to making sure that people are no longer forced to spend even one more Christmas apart.

There is still much work to be done. In addition to this issue, there is also the medical inadmissibility situation, whereby some of the caregivers are forced to leave their family members behind because one member of their family unit has a medical inadmissibility issue. Because of that, the entire family is being rejected. We have to ask what is wrong with this picture. Canada is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, yet we have a policy in place that discriminates against people with disabilities. This is wrong. Caregivers are impacted by this. We want to honour them, and creating a heritage month to recognize the Filipino community is welcome and absolutely to be supported.

To honour that motion and the words behind it, let us also put policies in place and change our immigration policy to ensure that those women who come here to take care of our families are not leaving their families behind, that we are not forcing the break-up of families. We can do this. Canada can do better. Let us honour the Filipino Canadian community with action as well as words.

With that, again I would like to thank the member for putting this motion forward. I ask all members of the House to work collaboratively, and I call on the minister to take action to change our immigration system. If people are good enough to work, they are good enough to stay.

● (1135)

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand there is consent to split my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Does the hon. member have the consent of all members in the House to split his time with the member for Winnipeg North?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Shaun Chen: Mr. Speaker, rising in the House today, I am pleased to support Motion No. 155 to establish Filipino heritage month, backing the efforts of my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Scarborough Centre, to acknowledge the tremendous contributions of the Filipino community in Canada, to recognize the richness of their languages, the depth of their culture, and to ensure that future generations never lose sight of just how important it is for us to reflect upon one's roots, the stories, struggles and successes of previous generations.

In my riding of Scarborough North, right across from my constituency office stands the Filipino Centre of Toronto, a community centre that began as one person's dream, a vision in which Dr. Guillermo de Villa Jr. saw not just a place, but also a path to the preservation of Filipino identity and individuality, a means by which new immigrants could ease their transition into settlement and integration within their new country.

This dream, after a difficult and exhausting journey, eventually became a reality. Now, nearly 16 years later, the centre is a place for both mingling and meetings. It houses a library, featuring a collection of books about the Philippines. It offers free language classes, as well as computer classes and a homework club for children. A free medical clinic is also available, providing consultations to those who do not have coverage, as well as certain medications, for free. Above all, the centre is what Dr. de Villa Jr. dreamed, hoped and wished it would be, a hub for members of the Filipino community to tell their stories. This is indeed the tale of the Filipino Canadian dream, a tale that is the result of hard work, a dream that has spawned much success.

The Filipino Centre of Toronto began as a place where community elders could meet at a time when they were being sent away from coffee shops and restaurants. It served as a safe space for struggling newcomers to find solace, emotional support and guidance; a place for the marginalized to seek help when there was nowhere else to turn. Also, it continues to be a place for the Filipino community to come together and cherish, comfort and educate one another in the context of their common histories, culture and lived experiences. The Filipino Centre of Toronto represents the community's broader story of moving beyond struggles to find tremendous success.

Over 850,000 of our fellow Canadians are of Filipino descent, the largest Southeast Asian group in our country. The Philippines is also one of Canada's largest sources of immigrants. This has led not only to greater intercultural learning but has also strengthened bilateral relations and people-to-people ties between Canada and the Philippines. An example of this relationship was the aftermath of the catastrophic typhoon Haiyan, which impacted more than 16 million people in the Philippines. In those trying times, our two nations stood shoulder-to-shoulder in this tragic aftermath.

Today, I stand together with the over 850,000 members of Canada's Filipino community to celebrate all they have achieved, and to remind us all about the promise and the challenge faced in achieving the Filipino Canadian dream.

Diversity and multiculturalism are what make Canada so great, which is why it is important for us to celebrate our diverse histories, cultures and lived experiences. We educate and we learn together, hand-in-hand. Indeed, in the many communities across Canada, including in Montreal and Toronto, Filipino heritage month is already celebrated every June.

I am pleased to join the member for Scarborough Centre and thank her for her leadership and vision as a joint seconder of this motion to declare June as Filipino heritage month all across our great country. Canada is a nation stronger because of its diversity, and the Filipino community has been an incredible part of our collective success. Let us all stand together and give this long overdue recognition to a community we know has helped build the Canada we know today.

● (1140)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my thanks to my friend and colleague, the member for Scarborough Centre, for bringing forward to this House a motion that I believe makes a very powerful statement about Canada's diversity and how important our diversity is to us as a nation. I would argue, as our Prime Minister has on numerous occasions, that it is one of the greatest strengths we have as a nation. It is one of the reasons we will continue to do well as a country into the future.

I was first elected in 1988. From virtually day one, I have been touched and blessed by members of the Filipino community. The community has been a major part of my life. It is second to no other community that I personally, and my family, identifies with, whether it is my kuya, Henry Celonas, or the many brothers, sisters and friends I have within the community who have assisted in shaping me and my family. Today the community continues to grow and be prosperous. As my colleague behind me referenced, we are approaching, in the next few years, one million people of Filipino heritage here in Canada.

I want to talk about the Manitoba story, if I can. Back in November of 1959, we had four people from the Philippines arrive in the province of Manitoba. It is believed that they were the first four from that community to actually arrive. In May 2009, I had the privilege in the Manitoba legislature to introduce a resolution to mark the 50th anniversary of those four nurses arriving in Manitoba.

It might have started with some of those professionals, such as nurses and health care workers and teachers and so forth, but it went right through every aspect of the economy. In fact, it was the garment workers of 1968 and 1969 and then 1971 and 1972 who really started to grow the community, as thousands of garment workers then started to sponsor fiancés, nephews and nieces and cousins to come to Manitoba to help fill the many jobs in a wide spectrum of industries.

Today the Filipino community in the province of Manitoba is getting close to 100,000. Think about that. Canada's population is getting close to 37 million and the Filipino community is getting close to one million. I would suggest that in the province of Manitoba, we get a good sense of how much that community has contributed to the overall economic and social vibrancy of the province. It continues to grow and prosper. It adds so much value.

We have a resolution saying that the month of June be recognized as Filipino heritage month. I think it is important for us to pass this resolution. Some provinces actually have done it. In the city of Winnipeg, we have had Philippine Heritage Week for many years. There are all sorts of celebrations.

To see a formal resolution to acknowledge the many contributions of the Filipino community is so wonderful and pleasing. I believe that in the month of June what we will see are extra activities that go beyond the Filipino community and a better understanding of the contributions this community has made not only to my home province of Manitoba but to Canada. No matter where one goes in Canada, we find that there is a healthy Filipino community that continues to grow and share its culture and heritage while becoming a part of Canadian heritage. When I think of people of Filipino heritage, I think of kind, loving, hard-working people with very strong ethics.

I would like to conclude my remarks by wishing everyone the very best in recognizing how important this resolution is. I encourage people, by June 2018, to be engaged with the community and to promote how much it has contributed to our country over the last 70 years.

● (1145)

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak about Motion No. 155, the motion brought forward by the member for Scarborough Centre. This motion seeks to recognize the contributions Filipino Canadians have made to Canada. It proposes that the month of June every year be observed as Filipino Heritage Month. The Filipino language and culture are very rich, and this motion recognizes that as well. Finally, it would identify how important it is to reflect upon Filipino heritage for generations to come.

Right now, there are over 850,000 people of Filipino descent living in Canada. That is almost 2.5% of the population of Canada. The GTA is home to the largest Filipino community in Canada, with a third of all Filipino Canadians calling the GTA home. In fact, Filipino Canadians represent the largest group of Southeast Asian Canadians.

The very first migrants from the Philippines arrived in Canada in 1930. Many of the original Filipino Canadians were women who came to Canada to work in the health field as teachers and nurses. As more and more Filipino migrants arrived here, they opened successful businesses and worked in professional positions, including as doctors and technicians.

The Filipino community in Canada continues to, as it always has, contribute significantly to the economic and social framework of Canada. It is a thriving community with a strong work ethic and an entrepreneurial spirit.

Since 1992, Filipinos have consistently ranked first as independent immigrants to Canada. That means that they are selected for immigration on the basis of their skills and their ability to contribute quickly to Canadian society and to the Canadian economy. That is significant. It displays how willing hard-working Filipino Canadians are to contribute to Canada and to do this very quickly when they come to this country.

Notably, Filipino Canadians have ensured that they are very engaged in Canada and Canadian culture, and even in politics. Conrad Santos was the first Filipino Canadian to be elected to a legislative assembly in Canada. He was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba in 1981. Federally, we are all familiar with the late Senator Tobias Enverga. He was the very first Filipino Canadian senator, appointed by former prime minister Stephen Harper. He was also the first Canadian of Filipino origin to be elected to public office in the city of Toronto, in 2010, when he was elected to the Toronto Catholic District School Board as a trustee. The late senator is just one of many notable Filipino Canadians.

There are other politicians, entertainers and athletes who are making incredible contributions to this country. However, it is not just about these more notable people. Every day, Filipino Canadians across the country are making contributions to their cities and communities. They are an important part of local economies and communities, and it is important that we acknowledge the contributions they are making here in Canada.

Additionally, Canada enjoys very strong and friendly ties with the Philippines. It is an important trade partner, and it is one of the countries in which Canada invests its international development efforts.

Filipinos are a very tight-knit and close people. They look out for each other and are very willing to help each other and other members of the community. In Markham, we are very lucky to have the Markham Federation of Filipino Canadians. It is a community association that aims to promote the appreciation and sharing of the Filipino cultural heritage with other cultures. It also encourages interaction with, and understanding of, other cultures in Markham and surrounding areas. This group in my riding has established a community centre in Markham where they provide programs that are educational and cultural and where they promote healthy activities for all age groups. It has music and dance programs for all ages. It also has seniors programs, language classes and many other things.

● (1150)

They also make sure to support newcomers and to help them integrate into their community. This is just one example of the generosity and willingness to contribute that Filipino Canadians have shown.

Why June? This motion is looking to recognize June as the month we would call Filipino heritage month. June is important in the Filipino culture. All Filipinos celebrate the Day of Freedom, or Philippine Independence Day, on June 12 each year.

June 12 celebrates the independence of the Philippines from Spain. The Philippine Revolution began in August 1896, and war and hostilities continued between Filipinos and Spain until the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1898. It was only then that the Spanish rule of the Philippines officially ended. However, the Philippines would not become an internationally recognized independent state until 1946, through the Treaty of Manila.

In 1962, the president of the Philippines issued a proclamation that declared June 12 to be Philippines Independence Day. As this quote from the official proclamation shows, he chose this day "in commemoration of our people's declaration of their inherent and inalienable right to freedom and independence".

Celebrations are held each year at this time. Families and friends gather together. There are often parades and fireworks. In my riding of Markham—Unionville, the Markham Federation of Filipino Canadians organizes a gathering each year that includes a flag-raising ceremony, lunch and entertainment. Many other Filipino communities across Canada do likewise.

That is why June is an important month in Filipino culture and heritage, and why it is important that we recognize Filipino heritage month in the month of June each year.

In conclusion, I hope that my hon. colleagues will join me in supporting this motion that was introduced by the member for Scarborough Centre. Filipino Canadians have made, and are making, a significant and important contribution to Canada. It is important that we recognize them for that. For this reason, I hope we can count on all sides of this House to support the month of June as Filipino heritage month.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul. I just want to point out to the hon. member that she will have about eight minutes rather than the customary 10, because of our time constraints.

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to stand to speak to this motion. I would first like to thank the member for Scarborough Centre for bringing forward this important motion, which recognizes a special community that has come here to Canada, through an annual Filipino heritage month. I am extremely proud to have been a seconder to the motion.

The Filipino community is especially significant in Winnipeg and in Manitoba in general. I am very proud of that heritage and the fact that I represent Kildonan—St. Paul, a riding that has over 7,000 very active Filipino members.

Talking a bit about history, Winnipeg has a long tradition and heritage with respect to the Philippines. In the 1950s and 1960s, very few Filipinos came to Canada. It is estimated that there were about 800, most of whom lived in Winnipeg.

By 1968-69, we had a special agreement with the federal government where we looked at enhancing our garment industry, which was second only to Montreal's garment industry. The Filipino community, assisted by the federal government, came to Winnipeg to build this thriving industry sector. At that time, 450 garment workers came.

In 1968, almost all of them were women. They were proud. They were strong. They were highly skilled. They were determined to make a life for themselves and their families, and that is exactly what they did. The community grew. By 1972, another 1,211 garment workers in total had come to Winnipeg. Today, the community exceeds 77,305 active citizens.

Their total population in Canada is approaching a million right now. According to the 2016 census, there were 837,000 Filipinos. It is a strong and vibrant community, as we have heard from others. However, it is also one that understands the importance of democracy and political activism. Liberal democracy has been a vital goal of Filipinos throughout time. We have seen that play out in Canadian politics, in their activities at the municipal, provincial and federal levels.

I am proud to say that Dr. Rey D. Pagtakhan actually lives in my riding of Kildonan—St. Paul. He was the first member of Parliament of Filipino heritage to be elected into this House in 1988. He served until 1997. I wish Dr. Rey well. He is strong, healthy and still politically active.

Fifty years ago, the women came to the garment industry primarily to make a big difference, and that is exactly what they did. When they came, they got a free ticket to Winnipeg and $125 spending money. We can only imagine. I am hoping they also got a parka if they came in November.

It was a tough group of women who came. They earned $1.20 an hour doing piecework, which is not easy work. Did they give up or go back? No. They stayed. They shared a house or accommodations, and they worked together. Now they are a thriving community of professionals, health care workers, administrative workers, tradespeople, entrepreneurs and politicians, and are well integrated throughout Canadian society.

We see many of them involved in schools or at church. On Sundays they are often barbecuing at Kildonan Park. They bring their fishing heritage and traditions, and we see many rods in the Red River. Across many of the 100,000 lakes in Manitoba, we see Filipino families catching fish for the barbecue later on at Kildonan Park. We see them in sports, in culture and in the very fabric of our governance. We are very proud to have such a strong and vibrant community.

● (1155)

This past August, with the member for Winnipeg North, I had the privilege of making a trip to the Philippines. We spent some time in Manila and met with embassy representatives as well as those from the Senate and Congress. We had a tour of the city, met locals and strengthened the ties and relationships between Canada and the Philippines.

I am very proud to have the opportunity to work for my Filipino Canadian voters and population, and I am thrilled to be a member of the Canada-Philippines Interparliamentary Group. It is my honour to be a seconder to this motion to celebrate Filipino heritage, and to support the motion by my colleague from Scarborough Centre.

● (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We have approximately a minute and a half or two minutes remaining.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge Park.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I look forward to continuing this debate in its second hour. It is a very significant move on the part of this House to recognize one of the fastest-growing communities across Canada. In fact, there are over 800,000 people of Filipino heritage who live from coast to coast to coast.

As my friend from Winnipeg North indicated, there are very few places in Canada where one will not find a Filipino community. It is the sheer determination of many people who have been coming here since the 1950s and all the way to this year, that has seen this community grow, persevere, work hard and really strive, not only to make a better place for themselves but also for a better life for all Canadians.

I look forward to resuming the debate next time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE ACT

The House resumed from September 21 consideration of the motion that Bill C-77, an act to amend the National Defence Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was deemed to have not spoken to this motion when it first moved.

As Bill C-77 is standing in my name, I would ask unanimous consent to be deemed to have not yet spoken to this motion in order to allow me to make a speech now.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Does the hon. minister have the unanimous consent of the chamber?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here today for second reading debate of Bill C-77, an act to amend the National Defence Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts.

Canada's military justice system has a long and proud history of helping to maintain a high level of discipline, efficiency and morale within the Canadian Armed Forces. My colleague, the Minister of Justice, has been asked by the Prime Minister to conduct a review of the criminal justice system.

It is in that same spirit that our government has committed to reviewing, modernizing and improving our civilian and military justice systems.

We are proposing a number of changes to the National Defence Act, some minor and others more significant. At the heart of these changes are our people, the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces who make extraordinary sacrifices every day in the service of their country.

When we formed government, we promised to put people at the core of everything we did. I am proud to say that this focus on people especially applies to our defence team. Since launching our defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged" last year, we have done great work to strengthen the Canadian Armed Forces culture and improve support to our members.

For example, we are investing in our military family resource centres by providing an additional $6 million per year to modernize military family support programs. This will provide more support to our military families when members are deploying or during long periods of absence. We are also helping to stabilize family life for Canadian Armed Forces members and their families, which frequently have to relocate. Through our seamless Canada initiative, we have started a dialogue with the provinces and territories to improve the coordination of services across provinces to ease the burden of moving. We have introduced tax-free status for all Canadian Armed Forces personnel that are deployed on named international operations.

These are just a few examples of what we are doing to look after our women and men in uniform.

Many members are aware of Operation Honour, which aims to eliminate sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. Through Operation Honour, we have introduced a new victim response centre, better training for Canadian Armed Forces personnel and easier reporting.

On a related note, our government is pleased to see the results of a comprehensive review of previously unfounded sexual assault cases conducted by the Canadian Forces provost marshal. Twenty-three cases have been reopened and identified for further investigation. I want to commend the Canadian Forces national investigation service and the provost marshal for their work in ensuring victims are heard.

The changes laid out in Bill C-77 build on Operation Honour and will further strengthen our ability to create a positive and respectful environment within our military.

Before I outline what is included in Bill C-77, I want to explain how the legislation fits within the broader context of what our government is doing to create workplaces that are free from harassment.

After we formed government, the Prime Minister gave me a specific mandate to work with senior leaders of the Canadian Armed Forces to establish and maintain a workplace free from harassment and discrimination. I spoke earlier about Operation Honour and how it was one tool we had to stamp out this unacceptable behaviour. However, it is not only in the military that we see these issues.

Over the last year, we have seen many acts of tremendous bravery, with victims speaking out and standing up to their abusers. I am proud of the efforts our government is taking to end this unacceptable behaviour.

For example, last spring, my colleague, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, introduced Bill C-65, which aims to prevent harassment and violence in federally regulated and parliamentary workplaces. One of the key elements of the legislation is providing better support to victims of this unacceptable behaviour. It is in the same spirit that we are debating Bill C-77 today.

Let me now offer a broad overview of the changes we are proposing through Bill C-77.

● (1205)

To start, the amendments would clearly enshrine victims' rights in the military justice system. We know from a Department of Justice report that victims often feel excluded and even re-victimized by the criminal justice process. Bill C-77 would address these concerns by committing to a more victim-centred approach in our military justice system.

To do that, Bill C-77 proposes to add a declaration of victims' rights within the code of service discipline. This declaration gives victims a voice. It will ensure that victims of service offences are informed, protected and heard. The declaration provides victims of service offences with four new rights.

The first is the right to information so victims understand the process that they are a part of, how the case is proceeding, which services and programs are available to them and how to file a complaint if they believe their rights under the declaration have been denied or infringed. Because of the unique nature of the military justice system, understanding it can be difficult and potentially intimidating. For those reasons this legislation also includes the appointment of victims' liaison officers to help guide victims through the process and inform them about the system. Under the victims' rights to information, they will also have access to information about the investigation, prosecution and sentencing of the person who harmed them.

The second right is to protection, so victims' privacy and security are considered at all stages in the military justice system. Moreover, where it is appropriate, we will ensure their identities are protected. This right to protection also guarantees that reasonable and necessary measures are taken to protect victims from intimidation and retaliation.

The third right is to participation, so victims can express their views about the decisions to be made by military justice authorities and have those views considered. This right will ensure that victims' views and the harm and loss they have suffered can be fully considered. In addition, it will be possible to submit military and community impact statements to the court martial. These will convey the full extent of harm caused to the Canadian Armed Forces or the community as a result of the offence.

The fourth right is to restitution, so the court martial may consider making a restitution order for all offences where financial losses and damages can be reasonably determined.

The next important change introduced by the legislation relates to how indigenous offenders are sentenced. This stems from the evolution of Canada's civilian criminal justice system and our desire to ensure the military justice system reflects our times, while remaining responsive to its mandate.

As the Prime Minister has said on many occasions, no relationship is more important to our government and to Canada than the one we have with indigenous peoples. Naturally, the fact that indigenous people are significantly overrepresented within the civilian criminal justice system is of grave concern to all of us. It is not enough to serve justice fairly. In a case like this, where we see such an imbalance, we must pursue the root causes of that imbalance and be considerate in our response.

The Criminal Code has provisions, introduced by Parliament, that have sought to alleviate the higher rate of incarceration for indigenous offenders. In fact, it calls for judges to consider all available sanctions, other than imprisonment, that are reasonable under the circumstances, with particular attention to circumstances of indigenous offenders.

While the military just system has not experienced any over-represention of indigenous offenders, the proposed amendments to the National Defence Act reflect the civilian system's considerations for sentencing and our nation's history. Bill C-77 would enshrine those same principles in the military justice system.

Similarly, Bill C-77 aligns military justice with the civilian system where LGBTQ2 rights are concerned.

● (1210)

In June 2017, our government added gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds of discrimination under the Canadian Human Rights Act. In November, the Prime Minister issued a formal apology to LGBTQ2 Canadians for the historic wrongs and injustices they suffered because of their gender or sexuality.

The defence team has been working hard through initiatives like the positive space initiative to help create inclusive work environments for everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. This bill is another step in that direction. It calls for harsher sanctions and sentences for service infractions and offences that are rooted in bias, hate or prejudice toward individuals based on their gender expression or identity. This change will foster a more inclusive and cohesive Canadian Armed Forces, while delivering justice for the victims of fear and prejudice.

The last category of changes introduced by this bill relate to broad efforts to make Canada's justice systems more flexible. In the case of the military justice system, the changes introduced by Bill C-77 would make the system faster and simpler. The summary hearing will be introduced and address minor breaches of military discipline in a non-penal and non-criminal manner. More serious matters will be directed to court martial and there will no longer be summary trials. The summary hearing would only deal with the new category of minor breaches of military discipline, known as service infractions. Service offences that are more major in nature will be dealt with at a court martial.

I want to be clear. There will be no criminal consequences for service infractions and military commanders who conduct summary hearings will be limited to non-penal sanctions to address them. This will improve the chain of command's ability to address minor breaches of military discipline fairly and more rapidly. We also expect it will enhance the responsiveness and efficiency of military discipline, thereby contributing to the operational effectiveness of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Canada's defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged", is a policy that will guide us for the next 20 years. It clearly outlines that our government will continue to support the women and men of our Canadian Armed Forces. The military justice system is critical to how the Canadian Armed Forces accomplishes what it does every day. It sets up a framework for all service members to maintain an outstanding level of discipline and a high level or morale so they can successfully accomplish the difficult tasks asked of them. Knowing they are protected by the military justice system that keeps pace with the Canadian concepts of justice builds on the great unit cohesion among our forces as well.

It is a pleasure to see this legislation progress to second reading, something my Conservative colleagues could not manage when they tabled similar legislation in the dying days of the last Parliament. However, we will see this through as we continue to make every effort to deliver for the women and men of our Canadian Armed Forces and all Canadians. The drive to be fair, to be just and to restore that which has been harmed is a drive that dates back to the very foundations of our country and our armed forces.

Today, we take steps in the pursuit of justice; steps to take care of victims, while we seek to ensure justice is served; steps to ensure that indigenous peoples in the military justice system receive the same considerations on sentence as those in the civilian justice system; steps to uphold justice within our military so it can continue defending our country.

I want to thank everyone for working with us toward this very worthy goal.

● (1215)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for his comments today on Bill C-77, and for his service as a veteran and as a police officer.

The minister talked about the work the Canadian Forces provost marshal was doing, and how the Canadian Armed Forces is engaged in Operation Honour and in trying to stamp out sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces.

I would love to get the minister's opinion on a recent decision made by the Court Martial Appeal Court, the Beaudry decision, where the appeal court is now essentially saying that any serious crimes committed by a member of the Canadian Armed Forces should be tried in a civilian court, not in the court martial system.

With all the cases that the court martial system and the judge advocate general is currently dealing with, I would like to hear the minister's opinion on: first, how that will impact morale and discipline within the Canadian Armed Forces, and the need we have for good order and discipline in the operations of the Canadian Armed Forces; and second, how that will impact the victims, those who are seeking justice, if they are thrown into the civilian system that has huge backlogs right now, which would otherwise be dealt with relatively quickly in the Canadian Armed Forces court martial system, and, more importantly, would allow Operation Honour to be fully implemented, with all members respecting that ethos within the Canadian Armed Forces.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member and all members of this House that we take the supporting of victims very seriously. We want to make sure they have support, and this is what the legislation is about.

In regard to the most recent case, we are appealing this decision to the Supreme Court of Canada. We believe that our military justice system is extremely necessary to make sure that the Canadian Armed Forces have the right discipline and morale.

● (1220)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly welcome the minister's remarks about putting people first in the Canadian military.

I want to ask a very specific question at this point. We are reforming the military justice system. Section 98(c) makes self-harm a disciplinary offence in the military code of conduct. This is a major obstacle to members of the Canadian Armed Forces getting help if they run into mental health problems that cause them to think about self-harm.

I intend to move an amendment at committee to delete this section from the National Defence Act and to remove self-harm as a disciplinary offence in order that Canadian Forces members can get the help they need when they run into these kinds of problems.

Would the minister support that amendment?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Speaker, I also want to assure members that we are going to make sure our members have the appropriate support when it comes to their mental health, to make sure that they have the resilience to serve in the Canadian Armed Forces, and have the appropriate transition.

With regard to what the member is discussing, I am happy to have a broader discussion on this. However, I think it is important to also look at how the Canadian Armed Forces military justice system is set up. It is not just set up for peacetime, but also for the extreme situations of war, as well. We want to make sure that the system is there to support our military members in all matters that we ask of them.

In terms of the question regarding self-harm, we want to make sure that we give all the support necessary to our military members so they do not have to be put in that situation. I am happy to have a further discussion with the member on this matter.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, the minister mentioned that the legislation was originally proposed at the end of the last Parliament, as Bill C-71. It has been three years, and we are only getting to it now, as Bill C-77.

After a review of the legislation, Bill C-77 versus the old Bill C-71, other than adding some language for the Gladue decision, as well as changing the terminology around summary hearings and summary trials, there was not a whole lot more there than what was there previously.

Why would it take three years for the government to introduce this legislation?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Speaker, there was an opportunity for us to make sure that as we were conducting a very thorough consultation of our defence policy, we could have thorough conversations on the changes we needed to make. We knew that this was very important legislation, which we wanted to move forward as quickly as possible, but we also wanted to take the opportunity to look at how we could improve things. We have done just that. The additions we have made to it do enhance this bill in a significant way, and in matters within the Canadian Armed Forces, creating that inclusive environment and sending a very good message. This allowed us the opportunity to have much further consultation so that when we did put it forward we had all the right input into it.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister of National Defence for bringing forward this important legislation. We have heard too often in the news, and it goes back some time, about issues of harassment in our armed forces. Would the minister be willing to expand on how the bill would help those who come forward to report harassment in the armed forces?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Speaker, probably the most important aspect of this is making sure victims are protected, making sure that the declaration on victims' rights articulates the following rights: the right to information, the right to protection and the rights to participation, restitution and complaint. This gives victims the confidence that, from the time a complaint is made all the way to the trial, they are going to be well supported. This sends a very clear message to the Canadian Armed Forces where our focus lies, and that is with the victims.

● (1225)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer to my previous question about having a larger discussion about the removal of self-harm from the military code of conduct.

In his speech, he mentioned the apology to members of the Canadian services who were kicked out of the military with less than an honourable discharge on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and those members are still waiting to have those service records revised. The defence committee, in December 2016, unanimously recommended this process get under way. I talked to the minister at that time, and he said we had to wait for the apology. The apology was nearly a year ago, and I still do not know of any cases where those service records have been revised. Can the minister update this House on the progress of revising those service records?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important case and the member and I agree on this. We are working very diligently on this. This is something that we want to make sure is done in a very thorough manner, and we are committed to this. My team is working to get me an update on this, but I want to assure the member that no one is slowing down in any case. Just as we were committed when we made the apology, we are committed to making sure that this injustice is corrected.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us what level of evidentiary requirements is going to be needed for the summary hearings, just to make sure that soldiers themselves do not become victims of the process and that they are protected from charges that may not be valid?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Speaker, I cannot give an exact detailed answer as to what the evidentiary requirements are. I am happy to get the member a detailed answer. This is about making the actual system far simpler and making it easier on the chain of command and the leadership so that the infractions are more about dealing with disciplinary issues rather than the serious infractions. Therefore, this actually would make things a lot easier for the Canadian Armed Forces and, more important, would speed up the process so they can maintain the discipline in the various units across the Canadian Armed Forces.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill C-77, an act to enhance victims' rights in the military justice system, an act to amend the National Defence Act and other related acts.

First and foremost I have to thank those who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces. The men and women in uniform who serve in the regular forces, the reserve force in all the disciplines and all the different trades take on an important task in keeping us safe here in Canada in dealing with our foes abroad. As long as we have adversaries who want to do harm to us here in Canada as well as to our allies, we need to have a standing force to protect Canada.

It is because of the skills required to be a soldier, an airman, an airwoman, a sailor in the Royal Canadian Navy, our air force and the army, the people that we need to do that job need the support of the Government of Canada, and it does that through the National Defence Act.

A lot of people who might be hearing this debate today for the first time may not understand why we have a separate military justice system within the National Defence Act for the Canadian Armed Forces versus the court system that we have for civil society across this country.

People need to understand that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is the hallmark piece of legislation, our Constitution, that even the National Defence Act is subordinate to and has to follow the laws as are written under our rights in the charter.

The Supreme Court of Canada has stated on numerous occasions, and most recently in the Moriarity decision, that the purpose of Canada's military justice system is "to maintain discipline, efficiency and morale in the military".

By allowing commanding officers as well as non-commissioned officers to have the ability to have efficiency and discipline within the armed forces means stronger morale, a better-abled armed forces, so they can carry out the duties that are bestowed upon them from time to time in operations by the Government of Canada.

As I already mentioned to the minister, I am glad to see that the government has moved ahead with our old Bill C-71, which would put within the Code of Service Discipline a declaration of victims' rights, something that the previous Conservative government did, as constituted in law, and now is making sure that the military justice system and that victims' bill of rights would be respected within the National Defence Act.

Some of those rights that we are talking about for victims are: the right to information, so that all victims would have general information about the military justice system; what types of victim services would be available through the Canadian Armed Forces and National Defence; and what type of information they would need. They would be able to hear about the progress of the case as it moves forward and also get all of the information relating to the investigation, prosecution and sentencing of the person who did the harm.

I talked earlier about Operation Honour. That information is critical in making sure that we respect the victims of sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces. This legislation would make sure that the armed forces provides those services.

There is the right to protection, the same thing that we have in civil society. All victims would have the right to security and privacy considered at all times through the military justice process. The armed forces would take reasonable and necessary measures to protect victims from intimidation and retaliation. A victim's identity would not be disclosed to the public.

The right to participation comes down to the victim having the right to have a victim impact statement put into the proceedings and read at the time of sentencing. Military justice professionals would have to consider these at all stages of the proceedings.

Finally, there is the right to restitution. In the event that there is the ability to provide some financial assistance to cover losses from the criminal activity that took place, the victim would have the right to restitution.

One thing that we would now see in the Canadian Armed Forces is the addition of the victim's liaison officer. This individual would proactively work with victims in their choice of jurisdiction for sexual misconduct matters. The liaison officer would help victims with the investigation and trial process, keep them informed, listen to them and get their views to determine how public interest is moving forward on that prosecution.

● (1230)

Witness preparation will be improved through this process because of the addition of the victims rights officer. They will make sure that the comfort and security of the victim are always taken into consideration. They will look at everything from the type of effort that prosecutors need for all of the information regarding the victim impact statement, and during sentencing in particular, to looking at maintaining the consistency of prosecutors throughout the court process. It is critical to make sure that prosecutors are using the same type of parameters in moving forward. That has to be paramount. Finally, these sexual misconduct cases would be expedited ahead of other trials that might be ongoing.

As Conservatives, we have always stood up for victims' rights. We believe that victims must have an effective voice in the criminal justice, which includes the military justice system. As I said, it was the previous Conservative government under Stephen Harper that brought forward the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, and now we would be enshrining those rights into the military justice system through Bill C-77. That is why we introduced Bill C-71 last Parliament in the last session.

We are going to be supportive of this process with the government, but are wondering why the Liberals took so long. We know they are copying our bill because it is the right thing to do. Everyone wants to stand up for the victims of crime, and of course we will want to study this further once it gets to committee.

Putting the rights of victims at the heart of our criminal justice system is important to ensure that victims have a more effective voice within the justice system, and that they are treated with courtesy, compassion and respect at every stage of the military criminal justice process, as well as in the civilian criminal justice process. This is about reversing the trend of criminals always getting breaks. We want to make sure that we keep our streets and communities safe, and that families of victims have an effective voice.

As Conservatives, we are very proud of our record with respect to the criminal justice system. It speaks for itself. We enacted the Safe Streets and Communities Act and reformed the not criminally responsible legislation. We also brought in laws against sexual exploitation, cyber-bullying and cyber-intimidation.

We believe that victims should always be placed at the forefront in the criminal justice system because they deserve and should have the right to information, the right to protection, the right participation, and where possible, the right to restitution. That is why we passed the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. It enshrines that in legislation. We are finally doing that through Bill C-77 in the military justice system.

Although we are all here talking about standing up for victims, I have been very disappointed over the last two weeks from seeing the government's response on the Tori Stafford case regarding Terri-Lynne McClintic. She has been put into a minimum security healing lodge in Saskatchewan where there are other children. She is the child killer of Tori Stafford. If we really believed in supporting victims' rights, there is no way that Terri-Lynne McClintic should be in a healing lodge. She should be behind bars in at least a medium security facility that has a fence, where she can be properly monitored and can receive the counselling she needs.

I will also note Chris Garnier, an individual who killed off-duty police officer Catherine Campbell, is sitting in prison and receiving Veterans Affairs benefits for PTSD that he got from killing Officer Campbell. There is no way that this individual should be given any veterans benefits, but the government refuses to rescind the services being offered to him. Garnier could get PTSD counselling through the Correctional Service of Canada. He does not need to be taking away benefits from veterans when he is not a veteran himself. He got ahead of the line of actual veterans trying to get help for their operational stress injuries.

Then of course we have Bill C-75, which I call the Liberal hug-a-thug bill. The Liberals have brought forward this legislation that reduces fines, penalties, and incarceration time for individuals for 26 different offences that right now are indictable and result in jail time, instead making them summary conviction offences. This could mean just getting a fine instead of jail time.

To get back to why we have a military justice system, I will read an old quote from Maurice de Saxe, who was a marshal general of France. He noted in a 1732 treatise he wrote on the science of warfare that "military discipline...is the soul of armies. If it is not established with wisdom and maintained with unshakeable resolution you will have no soldiers. Regiments and armies will only be contemptible, armed mobs, more dangerous to their own country than to the enemy."

● (1235)

That is why we have a court martial system. It is also why we have summary hearings so that the chain of command is able to deal with disciplinary measures. We always have to remember that since the earliest of times, members of the Canadian Armed Forces have been given great responsibilities in exercising those duties to protect this country. When we go back to our British history and operations, they were always governed by articles of war that were proclaimed by the monarch. Articles about different military offences and punishments at that time included the death penalty, or someone would have their head shaven if they were not conducting themselves in a respectful manner. The military has that ethos and the code of service conduct that its members have to respect. It is critical that the military function under that very hard discipline. When people are going into battle, service members standing next to each other must be bound by that same code and conduct themselves in like manner and be able to trust each other with their lives.

It is because of that history, the operations we undertake, and the creation of the National Defence Act in 1950 that we have this two-tiered system.

Members of the Canadian Armed Forces are often required to risk injury or death in their daily performance of their duties inside and outside Canada. They often have to use lethal force in an operation. They are going to be commanded to be the aggressors at times and they all have to be responsible under the chain of command. Of course, those activities and operations are sanctioned by the Government of Canada. That is why there has to be a military justice system that is separate from the civilian system and that puts a premium on the necessity for discipline and cohesion of military units.

The operational reality of the military has specific implications holding military members to a higher standard than what is expected of civilians. That is why there are the summary hearings or summary trials, as they are currently called, that deal with those disciplinary matters. It builds morale within the Canadian Armed Forces when everyone is marching in the same direction.

The realities of military life were acknowledged by the Supreme Court of Canada in its 1992 decision in the Généreux case. It stated that:

> The purpose of a separate system of military tribunals is to allow the Armed Forces to deal with matters that pertain directly to the discipline, efficiency and morale of the military. The safety and well-being of Canadians depends considerably on the willingness and readiness of a force of men and women to defend against threats to the nation's security. To maintain the Armed Forces in a state of readiness, the military must be in a position to enforce internal discipline effectively and efficiently. Breaches of military discipline must be dealt with speedily and, frequently, punished more severely than would be the case if a civilian engaged in such conduct. As a result, the military has its own Code of Service Discipline to allow it to meet its particular disciplinary needs. In addition, special service tribunals, rather than the ordinary courts, have been given jurisdiction to punish breaches of the Code of Service Discipline. Recourse to the ordinary criminal courts would, as a general rule, be inadequate to serve the particular disciplinary needs of the military. There is thus a need for separate tribunals to enforce special disciplinary standards in the military.

In light of that decision, I think it is key that a person must be punished severely, efficiently and with speed. In the current situation of civilian courts, that would not happen. We have murderers who are getting off from their crimes because their jurisprudence has not been respected under the courts and their cases have been thrown out because of the time it has taken to actually get them to a hearing.

● (1240)

The charter also recognizes the existence of the separate system of military justice within the Canadian legal system. If we look at section 11 of the charter that deals with the proceedings of criminal and penal matters, it talks extensively about the right to a fair trial. However, section 11(f) says:

> Any person charged with an offence has the right...(f) except in the case of an offence under military law tried before a military tribunal, to the benefit of trial by jury where the maximum punishment for the offence is imprisonment for five years or a more severe punishment;

Therefore, the charter specifically says that we have the right to have a separate and distinct military justice system. That has been upheld now in three separate decisions, most recently in 2015 in the Moriarity decision. In each case, the court has upheld the requirement for a separate justice system in the Canadian Armed Forces.

In Généreux, the Supreme Court found that the existence of a parallel system of military law and tribunals for the purpose of enforcement and discipline in the military "is deeply entrenched in our history and is supported by compelling principles."

When we start looking at some of the decisions going forward, and of course the one just delivered by the Court Martial Appeal Court in the Beaudry case, I do not know if they have looked significantly at the decisions already made by the Supreme Court of Canada. The reality is that the Supreme of Court of Canada has decided that we need to have a separate military justice system, a court martial process, as well as a summary hearings proceedings to ensure that we have that discipline and that morale is there, so that we have an efficient armed forces that can deal with the threats of the day and that everyone is then working hand in hand.

In the MacKay case, there was a similar note when the National Defence Act was considered as a whole. it reads:

> When the National Defence Act is considered as a whole it will be seen that it encompasses the rules of discipline necessary to the maintenance of morale and efficiency among troops in training and at the same time envisages conditions under which service offences may be committed outside of Canada by service personnel stationed abroad. [...] In my view these are some of the factors which make it apparent that a separate code of discipline administered within the services is an essential ingredient of service life.

Again, that comes back to the fact that our troops are deployed in places like Iraq, Ukraine, Latvia, Mali, and in past in places like Korea and Afghanistan, and across Europe in World War I and World War II. The reason we have it is that if crimes are committed overseas, those military members will still be bound by the military processes and the military justice that we have under the National Defence Act.

Again, in the Moriarity decision, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of paragraph 131(1)(a) of the National Defence Act, which incorporates offences under the Criminal Code and other acts into the military justice system, because the court acknowledged that the behaviour of members of the military relates to discipline, efficiency and morale, even when they are not on duty, in uniform or on a military base. This comes back to Operation Honour, which we are engaged in right now and which has been carried out very effectively by the Canadian Armed Forces. It is not just when one is wearing the uniform and is on duty that it matters, but it is an ethos and code of conduct that Canadian Forces members have chosen to uphold at all times, whether on duty or off .The Supreme Court of Canada has recognized that. Therefore, if there is any sexual misconduct, it can be dealt with.

In closing, I have to say that I am very concerned about the effect of the Beaudry ruling. I am glad that the government and the minister have appealed that decision to the Supreme Court, because it contradicts two other recent rulings of the Court Martial Appeal Court. Essentially what they are trying to do is to wipe out the military's ability to prosecute any civilian offences within the Canadian Forces.

To close, I will read the dissenting opinion of the chief justice of the Court Martial Appeal Court, the Hon. Richard Bell. He wrote that Parliament had intended to include the offences under paragraph 131(1)(a) of the National Defence Act as "offence[s] under military law tried before a military tribunal" when drafting subsection 11(f) of the charter. He noted that "Parliament was presumably aware of the legal consequences of the military exception set out in subsection 11(f) of the Charter, and there is every indication that it intended to exclude persons subject to the Code of Service Discipline from the right to a trial by jury when it conceived that exception".

● (1245)

I have to agree with him. I hope we can put stronger language into Bill C-77 to respect that type of legal opinion.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is good to know that the hon. member sounds very supportive of the bill. He threw a bit of shade at the government for not getting it done, as we are into our final year.

It is good to see the government getting it done. We did not see it getting done under 10 years of Stephen Harper. However, he also went into a few barbs against the government, one in particular with respect to Bill C-75 and hybrid offences. One hybrid offence in the Criminal Code of Canada is sexual assault, which is one of the worst crimes of which I can think. Why did the Conservatives not change that from a hybrid offence to a straight indictable offence? If he cannot answer that, does he not trust police officers and prosecutors to lay the right charge once Bill C-75 passes?

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I take offence to the member's suggestion that I passed shade and that we never got it done. We brought forward three different military justice bills to ensure the military justice system lined up with the decisions coming from the Supreme Court of Canada. We also incorporated other legislation. Therefore, three different pieces of legislation were passed with respect to military justice over our 10 years.

When I was the parliamentary secretary to the then minister of justice, I was involved in two of them. At the end of that was when we were trying to bring in changes to the Victims Bill of Rights, which had only been in place for a couple of years, to ensure we incorporated that. Those were written, tabled and brought forward just before the last election. That is why our bill, Bill C-71, did not happen.

However, It has been sitting on the minister's desk for the last three years and we are only dealing with it now. I take some leave in knowing that he had to deal with the issue of the Gladue decision and had to try to incorporate that into the language. However, that is a very small part of the bill.

Overall, we need to ensure that Bill C-77 respects victims' rights. We need to ensure that we have all of the resources there to uphold the military justice system. That is why I am very concerned about the Beaudry decision.

Finally, the provost marshal and the military police need to continue to get the resources they need to carry out the different investigations they have to undertake to ensure we have that code of conduct in good order within the Canadian Armed Forces.

● (1250)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as much as I enjoy the debate between the Liberals and Conservatives as to who has been the most tardy in dealing with public issues, I want to return to something much more substantive, and that is the question I raised with the minister of defence earlier.

We still have a section in the military code of conduct in the National Defence Act that makes self-harm an offence subject to penalties as high as life imprisonment. We know now that this is a major impediment to serving members of the armed forces getting the help they need with mental health issues.

Therefore, my question for the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman is this. Will his party support an amendment to remove self-harm as a disciplinary offence?

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the NDP and I served together on the national defence committee. I have always respected his positions and the passion he has for ensuring we are working for the benefit of all those who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces.

I am glad he has brought this issue forward. I am looking forward to having some of the witnesses appear at committee when we study Bill C-77. This whole idea that self-harm is an issue with respect to fines, discipline and court martial charges within the Canadian Armed Forces is something on which we do need to move fast. I think we all realize that those who serve have greater mental health needs because of the operational stress injuries they receive, like PTSD. If we want to get away from the stigmatization of mental health within the Canadian Armed Forces and have people come forward to seek the help they need to get better and to continue to bravely serve our country, then we have to start removing some of these impediments, like the section on self-harm. Instead of disciplining them, we should be helping them. By doing that, we will be able to get that help to military members and their families quicker.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask more of a technical question. How does the legislation achieve the appropriate balance between respecting the rights of victims, but also maintaining an effective military justice system that can operate efficiently in times of war and national strife?

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his service to Canada as a reservist in the Canadian Armed Forces.

I know the balance is there from the standpoint that victims in a lot of these cases within the armed forces are members of the armed forces themselves. When victims within the armed forces feel they will be protected and have their rights ensured and enshrined within the legislation, they will want to participate more. As well, more Canadians will want to serve in the Canadian Armed Forces, knowing their rights will be respected.

It is why it is paramount that we tie the Victims Bill of Rights into the military justice system so all victims of crime, whether civilians or members of the Canadian Armed Forces, are respected and will have their rights protected by the Government of Canada through this legislation. By having them protected, instead of being shamed on things like sexual misconduct, maybe by having a commanding officer say that sexual misconduct did not occur, victims will have a process they can utilize to ensure their rights are respected and their complaints are dealt with in an expedient matter.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I again would like to thank the hon. member for his commitment to our men and women in uniform. He is a passionate advocate.

In my previous comments, I asked a couple of questions. He answered the first but not the second, so I will go back to the second question. During his speech, he mentioned Bill C-75. The government is planning to make certain offences hybrid. Under the Criminal Code of Canada, sexual assault is a hybrid offence and is one of the worst things of which I can think. For 10 years, under Stephen Harper, why did the government not change that? Is it that the hon. member does not believe police officers and prosecutors should be trusted to charge individuals under the right offence?

● (1255)

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, the member is making an argument about whether certain offences should be dealt with in a lighter way. We see it being done in this legislation, where currently they are dealt with as indictable offences and there could be criminal time coming forward for things like sexual offences or using a firearm in an illegal manner in the carrying out of different criminal activities. We also see in the legislation that it will reduce a crime for those involved in pedophilia. There are these things happening.

If the member believes strongly that we need to have the right tougher penalties for criminals and that the punishment needs to reflect the crime committed, I hope he stands in his place and votes with the Conservatives on our official opposition day motion that Tori Stafford's killer, Terri-Lynne McClintic, should be in a prison behind bars.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, if the hon. member for St. Catharines believes the crime of sexual assault is a serious indictable offence, then I am sure he will agree with us tomorrow. He has probably pre-positioned himself to support our opposition day motion tomorrow.

If the member wants to talk about that a little more, I would like to give him the opportunity.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Barrie—Innisfil for the great work he has done as a firefighter, in supporting our veterans and for being an advocate for those who serve as first responders across the country. He knows all too well that we often hear a lot of words from the governing Liberals, but when it comes down to actual action, they always hug the thug. This is the unfortunate reality. That is the unfortunate reality. The most important role of a government is to protect its citizens. When it puts the rights of the criminal ahead of the victim's is when we have a problem.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak to Bill C-77, very important, though tardy and still incomplete, legislation. The last time there were major reforms in our military justice system was 1998, in what was then Bill C-25. At that time, Bill C-25 specified there would be a five-year review of those extensive reforms that had been mandated in law. That review was completed by the very distinguished former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, Antonio Lamer, in September of 2003, 15 years ago.

The conclusion reached by Justice Lamer was that after five years of experience with the reformed justice system, it was generally "working well", but he went on to say that it was, "not entirely without room for improvement". That was a very moderate statement as Justice Lamer was wanting to make. He then submitted 88 recommendations for those improvements.

Justice Lamer made recommendations in three main areas: actions to increase the protection of the independence of military judges; actions to improve the grievance process within the Canadian military; and actions to address some major deficiencies in the overall military justice framework.

Now, here we are 15 years later and we are still dealing with important issues in this bill, a bill that was delayed three times by intervening elections. However, both the Liberal and Conservative governments, as we heard them tossing at each other earlier in this debate, have been slow to act on these important changes.

On the first recommendation of the independence of military justice, the Conservatives did act early in the last Parliament in a separate bill, which was then Bill C-16. This was dealt with on an urgent basis because a deadline had been set for changes regarding the independence of judges by the Court Martial Appeals Court decision in the case of R v. LeBlanc. This deadline was met with royal assent on November 29, 2001.

For me, there is the proof that we could have dealt with all of these things very expeditiously. There was a will in Parliament, the Conservatives had a majority and we could have gotten through all of these reforms seven years ago. However, all of the other recommendations had to wait.

When the Conservatives finally did introduce in the last Parliament Bill C-15, in October of 2011, it contained many, but not all, of the needed reforms. Even then, progress on the bill was slow. It took two years to pass through the previous Parliament and it only received second reading a year after it was introduced. The bill sat for an entire year without any motion, debate or effective action on it.

Finally, in May of 2013, the bill passed the House and, for once, the Senate did act expeditiously and the bill received royal assent in 2013. However, here is the kicker on this one. Most of the reforms mandated in the bill did not come into force until September 1 of this year. Therefore, even though the bill passed five years ago, it was only last month that its provisions came into effect, again 15 years after those reforms were recommended by former Justice Lamer.

Why is that the case? It is pretty simple. Our military justice system remains woefully under-resourced no matter whether Liberals or Conservatives have been the government.

Justice Lamer's recommendations specifically recognized four important principles to guide reform in the military justice system. His first was, "Maintaining discipline by the chain of command is essential to a competent and reliable military organization." None of us in the House would disagree with that recommendation. It is important to keep in mind because, as my hon. friend from Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman pointed out, there are times when the military justice system has to be faster and perhaps harsher than the civilian system.

His second principle was that it was necessary to recognize the particular context of the military justice system, meaning that we, "need to have a system that will properly operate under those special conditions that our men and women are placed in, often abroad, under conditions from peacekeeping to peace-making, in what is often a hostile environment, and indeed sometimes outright war."

His third principle, perhaps one that is most important to me, is that those who risk their lives for our country deserve a military justice system that protects their rights in accordance with our charter, just like all other Canadians.

His fourth principle said that it was necessary to recognize, also an important point, that any doubts or lack of confidence in the military justice system may have negative impacts on morale as a result of concerns about injustice. The system has to be fair and be seen to be fair so it serves the interests of those who are risking their lives to serve our country.

● (1300)

Returning specifically to Bill C-77, New Democrats are supporting this bill at second reading, and we have recommended expediting this passage at all stages. After all, 15 years later, it is time to get this in gear.

Bill C-77 does complete most of the rest of the reforms to the military justice system that were first proposed under the former Conservative government, but unfortunately were left out when Bill C-15 was adopted in the last Parliament. I am not quite sure why it took the Liberals three years to get this bill before us, because the Conservatives had introduced essentially the same bill in the dying days of the last Parliament.

For me, the most important part of those reforms in Bill C-77 are those that add greater protections to victims in the military justice system. These were missing, they are missing, and these changes would align the military justice system with the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. It is important not only that those who are accused are treated fairly, but that those who have been victims of the offences are also treated fairly in the military justice system.

As I said, this bill would implement most of the rest of the reforms first proposed under the former Harper government and would modernize the military justice system, but there are still some areas in which it is lacking. We believe there are two areas in which improvements could be made without undue delay to this bill.

One important provision in Bill C-77 is found in section 23(c.1). This section would allow military judges to take into account the circumstances of aboriginal offenders when determining sentencing. This change is obviously welcome, as it is in keeping with the Supreme Court Gladue decision of 1999 with regard to how the criminal justice system operates in the civilian realm.

However, we believe it is possible, given that this is 2018, nearly 20 years later, that we may be able to improve the wording of that section to allow greater clarification of its intentions and the impacts of this section.

The second improvement we would like to see involves the subject of my questions earlier to the minister and to the Conservative spokesperson. This is the omission of reform that would help deal with the serious problem of suicide within the Canadian military.

In October 2016, the government announced a suicide prevention strategy, a strategy with 160 provisions to address a problem that is very real in the Canadian Forces. We are still seeing one to two members of the Canadian Forces die by suicide each and every month. That is a total of more than 130 serving members who died by suicide from 2010 to the end of 2017.

When we are speaking just of serving members, obviously that excludes the very high rate of suicide among veterans, which the government was not even able to track when the report was issued in 2016. Today, we know at least 70 of those who served in the Afghanistan mission have died by suicide, some of those still in the military; some of those having retired and become veterans.

Self-harm is listed as an offence in section 98 of the National Defence Act. Three offences are included in that section 98. Section (a) deals with malingering, and obviously in a time of crisis, avoiding duties should be subject to discipline. The second, section (b), is dealing with aggravating disease or infirmity, and I question whether that is really a necessary inclusion, it seems a lot like malingering to me. It seems like it is repeating in (b) what it just said in (a).

It is the third section, section (c), that concerns me. It says that anyone who:

> ...wilfully maims or injures himself or any other person who is a member of any of Her Majesty's Forces or of any forces cooperating therewith, whether at the instance of that person or not, with intent thereby to render himself or that other person unfit for service, or causes himself to be maimed or injured by any person with intent thereby to render himself unfit for service, is guilty of an offence....

Section 98, as a whole, goes on to set the possible penalties for self-harm as up to life imprisonment.

● (1305)

I ask members to think about individuals serving in the armed forces and suffering from mental health issues and needing help. Are they likely to go forward to their commanding officer and say that they are about to commit a disciplinary offence? This is an obstacle to getting the treatment those people need. It is a matter of human compassion. It is also a matter of getting help so that Canadian Forces members who have been trained, invested in and are part of a team can remain effective. Therefore, it is not only a moral question, it is also very much an efficiency question in the military.

This is a major obstacle, as I said, to serving members' seeking help, and omitting this section would have no impact on or injury to other serving members. The minister's response to my question seemed to implicate that there was some problem in omitting this section, but I would assert, and will bring forward some witnesses at committee, that harm to other serving members is already covered in other sections of the code of conduct so that this section on self-harm or asking someone to harm them or someone else really does not need to be there. All of those possible behaviours they could think of that the minister seemed concerned about are actually covered somewhere else.

I want to speak for a moment about a tragic case that I know best, and that is of Corporal Stuart Langridge, whose family I have come to know well, as they reside in my riding. Corporal Langridge twice attempted suicide while he was a serving member. He failed the first two times, but he did not seek the help that he needed. His family firmly believe that this section that makes it an offence was part of the reason that he did not seek help. Therefore, this section making it a disciplinary offence hindered rather than helped their son and, unfortunately, on his third attempt he succeeded and died by suicide. This led to an unfortunate attempt to cover up the details of his case, but that is not the topic here today and I do want to set that aside. The goal here is removing, as I have heard from families, from veterans and from serving members, a major obstacle to those who need help with serious mental health issues in getting the help they need. Making self-harm an offence is clearly a relic of old thinking about the scourge of suicide that continues to plague not only our military but this entire country.

One last major reform that was not dealt with in Bill C-16, Bill C-15 and in this current bill, Bill C-77 is that of the right to trial by jury. We had, as was noted earlier in the debate, a Court Martial Appeal Court ruling last week, which ruled that civil offences are not offences under military law if they are not connected to military duties, an oversimplification of the case, in the case of Master Corporal Beaudry. The government has appealed that decision, which was a split decision in the court, and has requested a stay of that decision until the Supreme Court can hear the case. The military justice head prosecutor, Bruce MacGregor, has said that this potentially affects about half the caseload of the military justice system. I am not going to take a position today on what the proper decision in that case should be. That is the job of the Supreme Court, not politicians. However, we can all recognize today that there may be further work needed if that decision is upheld by the courts.

Experts like retired judge Gilles Letourneau and the highly skilled lawyer from Montreal, Michel Drapeau, have argued that this is a question of fundamental rights, and that it will not affect military discipline. However, there have been concerns raised on the other side about the slowness of the civilian justice system and whether it can fully consider the context in which those crimes might occur.

My biggest concern is that this ruling raises questions of the ultimate disposition of sexual assault cases that were originally declared unfounded by the military police. The military police recently announced that 23 of those cases will be reopened for investigation. I am concerned about that because if this decision stands and those cases are transferred to the civilian system, they might fall under the time limits set in the 2016 Jordan decision, resulting in a dismissal because of unnecessary delays. Those are very complicated implications that we have yet to see play out from this court decision.

Let me say once again that the NDP believes that Bill C-77 should pass expeditiously, and we will support it. However, in doing so, we should not neglect the opportunity to make some improvements, most importantly, to remove self-harm as an offence in the military code of conduct.

● (1310)

Finally, let me restate the importance of these improvements to our military justice system. They are important to discipline, they are important to morale, and they are important as a right of those who serve.

Members of the Canadian Armed Forces are held to a high standard of discipline, therefore, their judicial system should also reflect that high standard. Those who risk their lives for our country should not be denied their charter rights when facing trial.

Other countries have recognized this issue and changed their processes. It is time for Canada to catch up in this area. It is past time that we take the necessary steps toward ensuring that our military justice system ranks as a model system and a system of which members of the Canadian Armed Forces can be justifiably proud.

Bill C-77 takes important steps forward, but there is still more work left to be done.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity over the past few years to substitute on the defence committee a few times and I know that the hon. member is a passionate advocate for members for the Canadian Armed Forces. I want to thank him for bringing up the story of a corporal to show us some of the issues that may exist in the bill. I appreciate his support of the bill. It sounds as though in his mind he thinks there is still a little work that needs to be done.

Could the member address this place on how best to get the bill to committee so we can get to work on the important issues that still remain?

● (1315)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I cited the case of Corporal Langridge, but there are 130 cases since 2010 that are equally tragic and equally important.

How can we best do this? I am expecting there have been discussions among the parties that this debate may finish today and therefore will have a vote within a couple of days to send this on to committee. I know that we have a commitment of the chair of the defence committee that this bill will be dealt with expeditiously.

I am confident that we can make good progress in a very short time.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the work he is doing with military family members who have dealt with the loss of someone because of self-harm. It is something that we have to address and this is the time to do it.

My colleague mentioned the Beaudry ruling and how that is going to impact on the armed forces. We are looking at a stay of proceedings in the interim, but would this be the time that we could address some of those concerns that have been raised by the courts including the Court Martial Appeal Court and provide more clarity within the bill on how we deal with sexual misconduct? If these cases all get transferred to civilian court, and there are over 40 of them, it will not only bog down civilian courts, but it will not be dealt with in an appropriate amount of time under the military justice system.

Should we amend the bill to provide greater clarity and direction to ensure that the exemption under the charter in section 11(f) is respected and is very well articulated so that judges and lawyers within the court martial system will understand what Parliament's desire is on this piece of legislation?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to work with the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman as the Conservative spokesperson on the defence committee. While we do not always agree, we certainly both have the best interests of the serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces and of Canada at heart. I trust him on that implicitly.

As to his question on the Beaudry decision, this just happened on Friday, so I believe, although I do not know for sure, that a stay would be granted and this case will be heard by the Supreme Court.

Today, I have to say that I am not sure that this is a good time for us to try to amend Bill C-77, until we see what the Supreme Court of Canada has to say.

I agree with the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman. Because it was a split decision, it is not inevitable that the Supreme Court would reach the same conclusions that the military court of appeal did. I would be cautious at this point about taking legislative action until we hear from the Supreme Court.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really encouraging to the New Democrat and Conservative sides' recognition of the importance of this legislation. For those participating in the debate and those watching and listening in, it has been a while since we have seen these type of changes. We have seen wide support for it demonstrated. I would like my colleague's thoughts on how important it is to advance this to the committee stage where we can start to hear more details and possible amendments. Does he have any suggestions for amendments to the legislation once it gets to committee?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what changes the hon. member is referring to, because I have been in the House since 2011 demanding that we move expeditiously in making changes to the military justice system. My position has never changed. This should have been done by the Conservative government before, and it should have been done before now by this government. Therefore, I certainly will not stand in the way of this getting to committee as soon as possible.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague the same question I asked the minister a little earlier. The minister talked a bit about the summary hearings and their importance. He felt they would speed up hearings and allow military discipline to proceed more quickly than it has in the past. Does the member feel that that is accurate? I am also interested in asking him the same question about the evidentiary requirements for the summary hearings. What level does he feel they should be at in order to protect a soldier so that we do not find innocent people being charged and held accountable for things they are not responsible for?

● (1320)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, what we have here are important reforms that would restrict the use of summary trials and require better investigation and better production of evidence to be used in the more formal proceedings that are likely to occur.

There are good things in Bill C-77. These measures were originally proposed by the previous Conservative government, and I am not sure why it took this government three years to get them before the House.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague on the defence committee. One of the things that would be amended is the protection of the privacy and security of victims and witnesses involving certain sexual offences. What is being proposed in the process is protection in summary convictions. With the hiding of the name of the predator, not letting other people in the same community know the name or the fact that one of these investigations is going on, does my colleague have concerns about the victims in these circumstances?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I have enjoyed working with the member on the defence committee. I am not sure I understand her particular question. Within the military, as such a close community, until there is some resolution of sexual assault or harassment kinds of cases, there may be good reasons why names are not made public to the larger community. It could be for the coherence of the military or for the necessity of working as a team. However, I believe there are provisions in the bill that would allow military judges to make those kinds of decisions. That is one of the improvements in the bill.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his advocacy on behalf of veterans and serving military members. How would the bill, in his opinion, improve the chain of command's ability to address minor breaches of discipline?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, in the military context, minor breaches of discipline are still breaches of discipline. That is one of the instances where the military context differs from the civilian context. We have to make sure that the system is fair in dealing with those. We have to ensure that appropriate disciplinary measures are taken, but also keep in mind that the military context is somewhat different from the broader public context.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on Bill C-77, an act to amend the National Defence Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts. I will be sharing my time with the member for Simcoe—Grey.

Canada and its justice system are renowned around the world. The previous Conservative government continually showed its resolve to support victims of crime by steadfastly taking actions that ensured that those victims had a more effective voice in the criminal justice system. How did we do that?

I think the important point is that the previous Conservative government enacted the Victims Bill of Rights. It did so to assure victims of crime that they would be assured that their government had their backs. As Conservatives we chose to listen to our constituents when it came to keeping our streets safe, because the public's safety then and always will be our number one concern.

During that time we also recognized the importance of enshrining victims' rights in the military justice system, which is why we introduced Bill C-71 in the previous Parliament. I assume that as Conservatives we should be flattered that the Liberals are copying many of our initiatives with Bill C-77. After all, it is the right thing to do.

When it comes to military justice reform, the previous Conservative government focused on restoring victims to their rightful place at the heart of our justice system. That is why we introduced legislation that mirrored the Victims Bill of Rights and put it into military law. It was the result of several years of work, and took into account hundreds of submissions and consultations held with victims and groups concerned about victims' rights.

Standing up for victims means helping to ensure that they have a more effective voice in the justice system and are treated with the courtesy, compassion and respect they deserve at every stage of the criminal process. Conservative are committed to keeping our streets and communities safe for Canadians and their families. We took decisive, concrete steps to hold offenders accountable for their actions, which are sadly being slowly eroded by the actions of these Liberals. However, it also means that we need to have a fair system for the accused.

The intention of this bill is to make changes to the Canadian military justice system. This bill is similar in many respects to our previous Conservative government's military justice reform Bill C-71. The purpose of Bill C-71 was to align the military justice system of Canada with the Criminal Code of Canada. It would have enshrined victims' rights into the National Defence Act, as well as put a statute of limitations on summary trial cases and clarified what cases should be handled by summary trial. Bill C-77 will institute these changes as well.

However, there are other differences between Bill C-71 and Bill C-77. The first difference is the addition of the Gladue decision in relation to paragraph 718.2(e) of the Criminal Code of Canada, putting it into the National Defence Act. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces should not be discriminated against based on their race, gender, creed or culture. However, special consideration for indigenous members in the Gladue decision that would result in sentences that are less harsh for them than other Canadian Armed Forces members could undermine operational discipline, morale and anti-racism policies. It is important that we reflect on this issue by considering the global context of the engagement of our men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Most countries with effective armed forces use some kind of court martial or other military court system. These court or military court systems can vary significantly from one country to another. However, they all tend to have one thing in common: They provide for trials of charges where there are allegations that military personnel have committed offences.

● (1325)

The Canadian miliary justice system was essentially identical to the British military justice system until the end of World War II. In 1950, new Canadian legislation known as the National Defence Act, or the NDA, was enacted, which provided for a single Code of Service Discipline. The NDA also provided for trials by two different types of service tribunals: court martials and summary trials.

Since the enactment of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, the courts martial system has evolved and now offers more protections for the charter rights of accused persons, particularly at court martials. However, court martials are distinctly military. The judge is a legally trained officer in the Canadian Armed Forces who is appointed by the Governor in Council. The prosecutor is a uniformed legal officer who acts on behalf of the DMP. The trial involves customary military formalities, such as saluting the military judge when he or she enters the court.

Court martials have jurisdiction to deal with military personnel for any offence under the Code of Service Discipline, including uniquely military offences such as desertion and insubordination, as well as other underlying federal offences such as theft under the Criminal Code and possession of a drug under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

Even though members of the Canadian Armed Forces are held to the highest standards of conduct, they do not give up the rights afforded to them under Canadian law, including under the Constitution. Nonetheless, an individual's rights can be limited where they are inconsistent with the basic obligations of military service.

The charter recognizes the existence of a separate system of military justice within the Canadian legal system. Section 11of the charter states:

> Any person charged with an offence has the right
>
> ...(f) Except in the case of an offence under military law tried before a military tribunal, to the benefit of trial by jury where the maximum punishment for the offence is imprisonment for five years or a more severe punishment.

Our Canadian Armed Forces, as they work shoulder to shoulder with our allies, must be consistent. Special consideration for indigenous members that could result in sentences that are less harsh versus for them versus for Canadian Armed Forces members could undermine operational discipline, morale, and anti-racism policies.

As we think of potential amendments, I hope there will be an opportunity at during committee stage to amend the language regarding the addition of the Gladue decision into the National Defence Act.

It should be stated that the Supreme Court of Canada has directly addressed the validity of a separate, distinct military justice system in three decisions wherein the requirement for a separate justice system for the Canadian Armed Forces has been upheld.

We support our Canadian justice system as defined by our charter and Constitution, and do not support a parallel justice system that would contravene our existing rights and freedoms and would have the potential of creating issues among our own Canadian Forces members and our allies.

● (1330)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across the way and I have served on committees together. I have always found his comments to be very thoughtful.

Along those lines, I am looking at the sentencing of indigenous people under civil law and their having the same rights under military law as under civil law, such that indigenous rights at the time of sentencing would take into account some of the provisions we have for indigenous peoples in terms of the types of sentencing they might fall under according to their traditions and culture.

Would the member not agree that we should have the same type of rights in civil society as we do in military society when we are working with indigenous peoples?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, I too have enjoyed working with my colleague on various committees.

A key point of this is that we are dealing with culture. I understand and respect the position that the Gladue decision has made in the general public, but we are talking about a military culture. That was the point I was stressing.

Our men and women work shoulder to shoulder with armed forces around the world when they are on operational duties, and it is critical that everyone that is with them is subject to the same set of rules. That means that we have to make sure that we have cohesion. That is the respect that we need to consider.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right that this has been a long time in the making and has taken quite a while to get us to where we are today. If credit is due, then I would congratulate the former Conservative government for getting this to the point where at least it can be picked up and continued.

Would he agree that it is in the best interests of the House to pass this bill through this stage so that it can go to committee to be studied, reported back and moved along the legislative process quickly so that this bill can be enshrined in law as soon as possible?

● (1335)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, it is extremely important, since we have an opportunity today, in whatever length of time this discussion is going to take place, to talk about the issues of concern so that when it gets to committee, we will be able to build upon that. I know there has been a lot of consultation over the years to make sure that we deal with the issues, some that I have presented. I know that the hon. member from the NDP presented issues that were important to New Democrats as well. As we move through the process, I am sure those at committee will be able to succinctly do what they need to do to get this particular bill out of committee and back to the House.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend spoke specifically about consistency as it relates to the potential of undermining discipline with our allies and the view on that. What are some of the things he is going to be looking for when the bill goes to committee in terms of the types of changes required for this piece of legislation?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, I have learned a lot by listening to my hon. colleague with regard to the military and veterans, and that is really important. The summary talks about the declaration of victims rights, which is a paramount issue, and also about a dozen different items to protect privacy and the security of victims and witnesses and factors the military judges have to take into consideration. I believe that the good people at committee will be able to look at that and bring all of this discussion together, keeping in mind the significance of the fact that our Canadian Armed Forces serve around the world to protect everyone.

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is much to like about Bill C-77, which will modernize Canada's military justice system through changes to the National Defence Act. Let me point out that much of Bill C-77 is actually a carbon copy of the former Conservative government's Bill C-71, which was introduced in June of 2015 and defeated here. It never made second reading.

As Canadians are well aware, Conservatives, more than any party, are committed to standing up for the victims of crime and to ensuring that victims have a strong voice in the criminal justice system. It is why we were the party that enacted the Victims Bill of Rights and why the concept of victims' rights was front and centre when we drafted Bill C-71 to ensure that victims also had rights within the military justice system.

As the government's Bill C-77 is based on so much of Bill C-71, I can say with confidence that it benefits from the years of work put in by the previous government to ensure that it was done right. There were hundreds of submissions and consultations held with victims and organizations dedicated to victims' rights in the preparation of that bill. Our legislation proposed that a victims liaison officer be appointed to help victims access information. New safety, security and privacy provisions were proposed to improve the protection of victims. Impact statements at sentencing were included to improve participation, and court martials would have been required to consider making a restitution order for losses. I am happy to see that the Liberals have kept these key points in the bill. Putting the rights of victims back at the heart of the justice system was a priority of our government. Bill C-71 was a serious piece of legislation that focused on modernizing the military justice system by enshrining victims' rights. I am pleased that Bill C-77 does the same.

Military justice is not something many Canadians are very familiar with, as it was and is used only by the Canadian Armed Forces. Most countries with effective armed forces use some kind of court martial or other military court system. Our system comes from the British and was virtually identical to that system until 1950, when new Canadian legislation, known as the National Defence Act, was enacted. Changes to the court martial system have happened steadily and incrementally over the years through legislative amendments by multiple Canadian governments.

In Canada, we have a two-tier tribunal structure in our military justice system. The summary trial is the most common. It allows less serious offences to be tried at the unit level. The other and more formal form of service tribunal is the court martial. The main purpose of a court martial is to support the government's ability to effectively employ its armed forces whenever and wherever necessary.

People ask what this actually means. Why is there a different system? The Supreme Court of Canada has supported the court martial system and its differences in operation versus civilian courts.

In R. v. Généreux, in 1992, the court ruled:

> The purpose of a separate system of military tribunals is to allow the Armed Forces to deal with matters that pertain directly to the discipline, efficiency and morale of the military. The safety and well-being of Canadians depends considerably on the willingness and readiness of a force of men and women to defend against threats to the nation's security. To maintain the Armed Forces in a state of readiness, the military must be in a position to enforce internal discipline effectively and efficiently. Breaches of military discipline must be dealt with speedily and, frequently, punished more severely than would be the case if a civilian engaged in such conduct.

Further, it found:

> The existence of a parallel system of military law and tribunals, for the purpose of enforcing discipline in the military, is deeply entrenched in our history and is supported by the compelling principles....

Similarly, in 1980, in MacKay v. the Queen, the Supreme Court noted:

> When the National Defence Act is considered as a whole it will be seen that it encompasses the rules of discipline necessary to the maintenance of morale and efficiency among troops in training and at the same time envisages conditions under which service offences may be committed outside of Canada by service personnel stationed abroad.... In my view these are some of the factors which make it apparent that a separate code of discipline administered within the services is an essential ingredient of service life.

● (1340)

The men and women in uniform are held to a higher standard than the rest of us. They maintain that standard with pride and professionalism. The men in my family who served in the armed forces are some of the most dedicated, proper and honourable individuals I have ever known. My grandfather Conway served in the Canadian Army, and my two great-uncles, Jim and Doug Johnson, served in the Royal Canadian Navy. All served in the Second World War. They carried themselves in life as they did in service, at the higher standard they learned in the services, and they would expect no less.

Serving as the member of Parliament for Simcoe—Grey since 2011, I have been honoured to represent some of the greatest Canadians there are: those serving at Canadian Forces Base Borden. CFB Borden has been a focal point in our region since it opened in July 1916. First known as Camp Borden, it was named after Sir Frederick Borden, Canada's minister of militia and defence, our first, from 1896 to 1911. It continues to play a critical role in Canada's military structure.

In 1917, Camp Borden was selected as the location for the Royal Flying Corps Canada, and an aerodrome for the RCAF was built, thereby becoming the birthplace of the Royal Canadian Air Force. Camp Borden's training area was expanded in 1938 and became home to the Canadian Tank School.

In 1940, several other wartime schools followed: the Canadian Infantry Training Centre, the Canadian Army Service Corps Training Centre, the Canadian Army Medical Corps Training Centre, and the Canadian Provost Corps Training Centre. The Cold War brought more schools to CAF Base Borden, including the Canadian Forces School of Administration and Logistics as well as the Canadian Forces Health Services Training Centre. In 1968, Camp Borden and RCAF Station Borden officially merged into CFB Borden.

As a physician, I am particularly pleased that the Canadian Forces Health Services Training Centre is located at CFB Borden. I have had many opportunities to meet the dedicated medical professionals who tend to those who keep us safe every day. In fact, one of the highlights of my public service was my 2010 trip to Afghanistan as part of a CIDA medical mission in which I worked with a number of the same soldiers who trained at Base Borden.

Also located at CFB Borden is the centre that has particular relevance to the bill we are discussing today, the Canadian Forces Military Police Academy. Much as our police forces across the country enforce the rules of law, the military police are responsible for doing the same under the military justice system.

The academy at CFB Borden trains military police, who then serve across the country and around the world as part of NATO and UN operations as well as at Canadian high commissions and embassies. I know that they will welcome the work that has gone into this bill.

It is really a privilege to represent the men and women of CFB Borden. It has been an honour to attend Remembrance Days and other ceremonies with them. I am also pleased to have played a part in securing investments at the base. I treasure the relationships I have developed with specific soldiers who serve there.

When we talk about our open democracy, these are the soldiers who protect it. They are the ones who ensure that we get to live in a kind and generous society. They are the ones who guard our freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedoms that individuals in other places around this globe may not enjoy.

I want to thank the men and women at Base Borden, those serving in the armed forces today and those who have served. I thank them for their service, their dedication, and their willingness to put their lives on the line to protect the lives of other Canadians as well as our Canadian democracy.

I am happy that the Liberals took so much of our work on Bill C-71, as we consulted extensively across the country with the military community. I am prepared to support this bill at second reading.

● (1345)

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her speech and for telling us about Camp Borden and how proud she is to be representing those individuals, as many of us on this side of the House are.

I am very proud of representing those in the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, and because of that, I want to see this bill get to committee as quickly as possible. The hon. members in the NDP suggested some potential amendments. They are supportive. The Conservatives are supportive. The government is supportive. Would the hon. member call on this House to call the question and get this to committee as quickly as possible so that she can help her constituents at Camp Borden?

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, I am supportive of this bill going to second reading, in particular because of the work, as I mentioned, done by a government I served in, a Conservative government that put forward Bill C-71, a bill that truly looked at making sure that the victim came first and that enshrined the principles of the Victims Bill of Rights.

I look forward to it going to committee and contemplating those amendments members and colleagues from the NDP put forward but also those the Conservatives may put forward as well.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does my colleague really believe the Liberals are serious about this bill and about victims rights? Over the last week or so in the House, particularly in question period, we have had some heated exchanges about the Liberals' failure to represent victims fairly across the country.

Therefore, does she feel they are serious about the bill and seeing it through or does she expect that when we do get it passed at second reading and it goes to committee, we will see the Liberals begin to play some of the same games we have seen them play on other issues, particularly Tori Stafford, Chris Garnier and those kinds of things?

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, obviously I am hopeful the Liberals will stick true to their word on Bill C-77 about ensuring that victims rights are front and centre.

The member is correct. We have seen over the last two weeks in the House conversations around the challenges when victims voices are definitely are not heard. The Liberals seem to put forward opportunities all the time, and in the case of one individual who is currently incarcerated, where those rights come before those of other individual Canadians who we know are victims. Therefore, I am hopeful this will move forward and victims rights are protected. The proof will be when we come back to the House and passes a law that enshrines those victims rights.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member across the way for particularly highlighting that a lot of this work had happened in the previous parliament, but unfortunately not passed. It did get royal assent in April 2015, but could not get a full legislative pathway because of the election.

I wonder about the additions we have made to this bill, particularly relating to the previous question around indigenous sentencing and how indigenous people have different ways of handling sentencing and restitution, as well as gender considerations and gender expression and whether these two areas of sentencing should be included in the legislation going forward.

● (1350)

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, I think all members of the House look forward to a fulsome debate in committee with respect to the specifics of the bill. I am looking forward to seeing the results from the committee. I think we will go forward.

Paramount for myself is that all Canadian, no matter what their background may be, their ethnicity or gender, if they are a victim of a crime, their rights come first and foremost and that those rights of victims are enshrined in this legislation and are maintained across the country.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak about Bill C-77, to enact military justice reforms. They say that imitation is the best form of flattery. The government of the day has taken into account many of the proposals that were in Bill C-71 from the previous government, with the exception of adding a couple of things. It has simply copied and pasted that legislation into Bill C-77.

I want to spend a couple of moments on some issues that have come up lately in the House. Throughout the debate this morning, we heard the government side talk about victims and victims' rights. On this side of the House, and in the previous government, I have strongly advocated for the rights of victims, as we did the previous government with the introduction of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. It is paramount that governments ensure that they put the rights of victims ahead of the rights of criminals.

Over the course of the last couple of weeks, we have seen some highly publicized situations come up that have gained the attention of Canadians, in large part because of the issues brought up in the House. I will note two cases in particular as examples.

There is the Christopher Garnier case in Nova Scotia. Christopher Garnier murdered police officer and volunteer firefighter Christine Campbell. It was a highly publicized case. Ahead of veterans, Mr. Garnier was receiving PTSD benefits from Veterans Affairs.

Of course over the last week, we have also seen the issue around Tori Stafford come up. Her murderer is now sitting in an aboriginal healing centre in northern Saskatchewan when she should be behind bars and razor wire, which is exactly where she was before.

On the issues of victims' rights, we have to ensure we put them ahead of the rights of criminals. We have not seen that, as an example in the case of the government, over the course of the last couple of weeks. Many of us heard the father of Tori Stafford over the weekend, pleading with the Prime Minister of our country to correct that situation.

Fortunately, tomorrow on opposition day, members of the government side will have the opportunity to stand and do what is right with respect to an opposition day motion we will be put forward. It calls on the Government of Canada, the Prime Minister, and the Minister of Public Safety to reverse the decision of Correctional Service Canada and ensure Tori Stafford's killer is put back behind bars and razor wire where she belongs, not surrounded by trees at a healing centre. The government and its members will have the opportunity tomorrow to do the right thing by standing in support of the opposition day motion.

On the issue of Bill C-71, as I said earlier, the Conservatives will always stand for victims and not criminals. Over the weekend, I had a robust discussion about this very issue as it related to criminals. It was more so about the current legislation, Bill C-71 and Bill C-75, as it relates to the new Liberal gun registry and changes to criminal justice acts, and in particular about the list of many otherwise serious criminal activities being reduced to summary convictions.

In some of the discussions I had around my riding this weekend, people were quite concerned not only with the gun registry and that it did little to tackle the real issue of gangs, gang violence and illegal gun activity, but also with the fact that many of these more heinous and serious crimes would be potentially reduced to summary convictions. The reason for that is the government's inability to fill judicial appointments on the bench and cases are getting backlogged. The government would simply rather slap criminals on the wrist with this potential summary conviction rather than looking after victims' rights and victims instead of criminals.

● (1355)

Part of this legislation, one of the important pieces of it, is the Gladue decision. For the most part, this is a copy and paste of the previous bill, Bill C-71, from the previous Conservative government. However, the main difference between the two would be the addition of the Gladue decision into the National Defence Act.

In effect, this addition would mean that aboriginal members of the CAF, who face charges under the National Defence Act, would face lighter punishments if convicted. That causes problems with respect to the fact that the special considerations for indigenous members could result in sentences that would be less harsh than those of other CAF members. In fact, it could undermine the operational discipline, morale and some of the anti-racism policies of the CAF. It is a concern.

We will support this legislation and get it to committee to ensure we hear from those various stakeholders, such as first nations communities and advocates.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil will have 13 minutes and 45 seconds remaining when we resume debate after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government kept telling us that no free trade deal was better than a bad free trade deal, but then it went ahead and signed the worst possible deal. Quebec is losing so much and gaining nothing.

We are losing on supply management with concessions that are going to hurt our farmers. Illegal tariffs on steel and aluminum were not addressed either. We will just have to pin our hopes on Mr. Trump's good will. Our retailers are losing too with provisions that give giant online retailers an even greater competitive advantage. Chalk up another loss for health care with Ottawa protecting American pharmaceutical companies from low-cost drugs.

Ottawa gave Mr. Trump everything he wanted and got nothing for Quebec in return. The Prime Minister got taken for a ride by a president who had no interest in reaching a deal unless Canada knuckled under across the board. Once again, Quebec did not have a seat at the table, and once again, this trade deal is going to cost us dearly.

* * *

NATIONAL SENIORS DAY

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October 1 is National Seniors Day in Canada. According to the United Nations, today's seniors were the driving force behind the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That is why Canada, the UN and the entire global community want to celebrate these human rights champions.

Parliament has recognized the outstanding contribution seniors make to Canadian society. Seniors contribute by sharing their experience, expertise and knowledge with younger generations. That is why our government is working hard to raise their income, increase their inclusion in society and improve their health, for example.

October 1 is an opportunity for all Canadians to thank seniors and promise them that their rights will always be respected.

* * *

● (1400)

[*English*]

DON MCDONALD

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday we laid Don McDonald to rest. Don was a man of many passions, who gave of himself, his time and his energy to countless organizations.

A proud Scotsman, Don played the bagpipes for over 65 years. There was not an organization that the pipe major did not volunteer for. He was a military man, receiving a lifetime membership to the Royal Canadian Legion.

Under Don McDonald, Saskatoon held the largest indoor Remembrance Day service in this country every year. Don was a huge supporter of Saskatchewan football, spending eight years as its president. He co-founded the Prairie Football League. He was commissioner of the Canadian Junior Football League.

Don was known, though, as Mr. Hilltop, serving seven decades with the blue and gold. He was named to three sports halls of fame: the Saskatoon Sports Hall of Fame, the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame and in 2015 the Canadian Football Hall of Fame.

Don will be missed.

* * *

NATIONAL SENIORS DAY

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is National Seniors Day, a day when Canadians are invited to celebrate the older adults in their lives.

Here on the Hill, our Minister of Seniors has organized a series of round tables to enable stakeholders to discuss seniors issues and explore ways to ensure that federal government programs and services respond to Canada's aging population.

Our nation's seniors have created the framework for our country's success and have helped build the open, diverse and compassionate society we all enjoy today. With the number of seniors projected to reach 10 million by 2036, it is vital that we support their needs. By investing in seniors, we are investing in the well-being and prosperity of Canada.

I would like to invite all those in the House to attend the National Seniors Day reception tonight from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in room 216, Centre Block, with refreshments provided by CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired People.

Let us all celebrate our seniors today and every day.

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[*Translation*]

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for months now, Quebeckers and Canadians have been calling on the government to fully protect supply management in the renegotiation of NAFTA. Unfortunately, we learned this morning that the new agreement that the government just signed with the United States and Mexico creates a third breach in the supply management system. Now, 10% of the domestic market will be open to foreign markets.

The Prime Minister said repeatedly that he wanted to protect supply management and that Canada would rather sign no deal than a bad deal. Well, I have some news for him. The agreement he just signed is a bad deal. How can the Prime Minister say he is satisfied with the outcome when he caved in to the American President?

Dairy farmers are furious, disappointed and worried, and with good reason. These additional concessions will be another major hit to producers and farmers in the Eastern Townships. Once again, they are the ones paying the price and being used as the Prime Minister's bargaining chip.

Obviously, the Liberals never intended to keep their promise. Rather than protecting local farmers, the government simply betrayed them once again.

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[*English*]

MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week is Mental Illness Awareness Week, and as chair of the mental health caucus, I am pleased to see members from across party lines taking time out of their schedules to meet with mental health advocates and researchers from across the country.

As Canadians, and as leaders, our awareness of the realities of mental illness has never been greater. As I look around Parliament today, I see the will for real change. However, there is still so much work for us to do.

I hope all members of Parliament can take a moment this week to meet with people who are fighting for that change. Join me in conversation with Mental Health Research Canada tonight. Take the time tomorrow to hear the lived experience of CAMIMH's "Faces of Mental Illness".

As leaders, this is a week for us to take a moment to listen, learn and act together.

* * *

MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support the 2018 Mental Illness Awareness Week as we seek to end the stigma associated with mental illness.

My community of Sarnia—Lambton and many others like it have felt the impact of mental illness and the lack of resources to address these problems. We know that one in five Canadians will suffer a mental illness, which is why we must work hard to remove the stigma attached to discussing such issues and provide the resource support for these impacted communities.

I am also honoured to inform the House that I will be co-hosting a special reception with the Speaker, the member for Vancouver Kingsway and the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health to celebrate Mental Illness Awareness Week 2018. I encourage all members to join us tomorrow, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

● (1405)

NATIONAL SENIORS DAY

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, I attended many events honouring seniors and recognizing their volunteer efforts in my riding. Today is National Seniors Day and an opportunity to pay tribute to the seniors who built our country, contribute to our society and continue to mentor us.

After a lifetime of hard work they deserve a dignified retirement. In 2017, our government invested $55 million in the new horizons for seniors program to support seniors' social engagement in their communities. Additionally, since 2016, our government has created 5,000 new housing units for seniors, and through the national housing strategy we have made creating more affordable housing for seniors a priority.

With over 8.2 million Canadians over the age of 60, it is vital for us to continue investments in support of our seniors.

* * *

HOUSING

Hon. Kent Hehr (Calgary Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, without a place to live, it is difficult, if not impossible, to build a life. That is why affordable housing advocates are so excited about our game-changing national housing strategy. The $40-billion investment will reduce homelessness by 50% and give countless Canadians an opportunity to build their lives.

In Calgary, the national housing strategy is already having an impact. Horizon Housing Society, the Resolve campaign and Silvera for Seniors are partnering with our government to build 161 affordable housing units for low-income seniors, families and individuals. This affordable housing project in Calgary was the first to receive federal funding under our game-changing plan.

Thanks to their hard work and effort, countless more Calgarians will be able to stop worrying about trying to put a roof over their head, and start building their lives.

* * *

BREAST CANCER

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this weekend was Run for the Cure for breast cancer. Every year, over 26,000 Canadian women are diagnosed with breast cancer. One in 31 women in our country will die from it, 5,000 of them this year alone.

My mother Lynne was one of those women. She was a strong, passionate and generous mother. She had three children, and if she was alive today she would meet her five amazing grandchildren: Harper Lynne and Cashton Leitch, and Maelle, Collins and Jeremy Heath, who are here with us in the gallery today. To honour my mother's life and legacy, our family has organized an annual charity event, and the proceeds go to breast cancer research.

The 18th annual event was held last week. It raised over $17,000 to bring us to over $250,000.

Anyone who has a family member battling breast cancer should know that with continued research and support, we will beat this terrible disease so that every grandmother can meet her grandchild.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL SENIORS DAY

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, October 1, is National Seniors Day.

[*English*]

National Seniors Day is an opportunity to celebrate seniors from sea to sea. It is an occasion to acknowledge the lifelong contributions our seniors have made to our communities and to our country. I invite my colleagues and Canadians to take the time to say "thank you" to a senior.

[*Translation*]

My riding of Alfred-Pellan is lucky to have seniors pitching in every day to help make our community stronger and more inclusive. Our seniors continue to share their stories and heritage with us. These are sometimes tales of hopes and dreams, but also tears and sacrifice.

I want to thank all our cherished seniors in Alfred-Pellan and Canada for having shaped Canada into the country I know today. I want to thank them for the sacrifices they have made and for being a source of inspiration.

* * *

[*English*]

NORTH CAPE FISHING ACCIDENT

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a person born and raised in a small fishing community, a tragedy like the one that occurred off North Cape, Prince Edward Island hits me very close to home.

Last week, when the fishing vessel *Kyla Anne* capsized in rough waters and with it took the lives of Captain Glen DesRoches and Moe Getson, it reminded me of the risk faced by fishers and their families every time they take to the water. I would like to take this opportunity to send my heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of the two men lost in this terrible tragedy.

I would also like to thank the countless community volunteers and professionals who were involved in the search and rescue efforts for the *Kyla Anne*.

* * *

● (1410)

[*Translation*]

CHARLES AZNAVOUR

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he soothed us with his voice, his lyrics, his passion. I am talking about my favourite French singer of all time, my idol, Charles Aznavour.

I was six or seven when I first heard his music. That song, *La bohème*, still brings happiness today.

His melodies and soulful lyrics were so enthralling that even today they make us want to hum those songs and reflect on treasured moments.

Who could forget his poignant songs *Mourir d'aimer*, *Que c'est triste Venise*, *Les plaisirs démodés*, or *For me formidable*?

Today, we bid farewell to a legendary artist, but his memory will live on in our minds and our hearts. I can still hear him singing *Non je n'ai rien oublié*.

Rest in peace, Mr. Aznavour.

* * *

NATIONAL SENIORS DAY

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to mark National Seniors Day.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and honour all seniors and to recognize the invaluable contributions they have made and continue to make to our families, workplaces, and communities, and to Canada.

[*English*]

Seniors worked hard for us, and we are working hard for them. We took action to improve income security by restoring the age of eligibility from 67 to 65 for the old age security pension and the guaranteed income supplement. We increased the GIS for the most vulnerable single seniors by almost $1,000 per year. We took concrete steps to improve health care services, increase affordable and accessible housing, and promote social inclusion for Canada's seniors.

Seniors helped build our country and left us a strong legacy. On National Seniors Day, I invite everyone to join me in thanking seniors across Canada for making a positive difference in all our lives.

* * *

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to invite all MPs to join Sandy and Brian Stewart and the all-party oceans caucus this Wednesday, October 3 after votes, at the Lansdowne Cineplex, for an advance screening of Rob Stewart's newest film, *Sharkwater: Extinction*, which opens in Canadian theatres on October 15.

Rob Stewart was a Canadian filmmaker, photographer, conservationist and my friend. He spent his entire life educating people about the vital role sharks play in maintaining healthy ocean ecosystems and the horrific practice of shark finning, which kills 70 million to 100 million sharks a year. He tragically died in January 2017 while shooting this film, a documentary about the illegal shark-finning industry.

Canada could honour Rob's work and provide a lasting legacy for his efforts by moving forward with a shark fin import ban. I invite members to join us Wednesday to learn more about this important issue and how they can be part of the solution.

* * *

NATIONAL SENIORS DAY

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I stand in this House today to celebrate our National Seniors Day. Far too often, our busy lives often cause us to forget about the elders in our lives, those senior citizens who have a lifetime of knowledge and wisdom to impart on the younger generations. These are the people who built the Canada we love.

That is why in 2006, the Conservative government appointed the first minister for seniors and in 2010 established the first National Seniors Day. I was privileged to have served as the minister for seniors for four and a half years.

I hope all members in this House as well as Canadians watching from home will take the time to visit or volunteer in a senior's home in their community, and reach out to their parents and grandparents and share with them how grateful we all are for their dedication and efforts in both building our nation and raising its people.

I wish everyone a happy Seniors Day.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to speak today on the recent accomplishments achieved by Canada, the United States and Mexico. Today we reached consensus on a new, modernized trade agreement, the USMCA.

● (1415)

[*Translation*]

Canada wanted to reach a good agreement, and we were successful.

[*English*]

The USMCA is good for hundreds of thousands of Canadians who work in the auto industry. It is good for Canadian business. It is good for Canadian farmers and for the energy sector.

[*Translation*]

This agreement will secure economic stability and promote future job growth.

[*English*]

The USMCA will result in freer markets, fairer trade and robust economic growth in our region. It will strengthen the middle class and create good, well-paying jobs and provide stability and confidence for investors.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are waiting to see the details of the new free trade agreement with the United States and Mexico to assess its full impact.

We do know that the Prime Minister made concessions with respect to access to the dairy market, as well as to Class 7.

Can the Prime Minister tell us whether he got any concessions from the United States regarding their subsidies to the industry?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the agreement we reached yesterday is good for Canadians and for market access across the continent. It is very important that we continue to show that Canadians are innovators and work hard to succeed.

We worked with dairy industry stakeholders to make sure that they will be compensated for the market share we had to cede to the Americans.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he did not answer the question as to whether he was able to get concessions from the United States on the very same issue.

When the Prime Minister offered to renegotiate NAFTA, there were no sunset clauses, steel tariffs or auto quotas and we already had the dispute resolution mechanism, so these are not new gains in this deal. We had hoped that the government might negotiate gains for Canada, like an end to the Buy America policy that cost billions of dollars and thousands of jobs.

Does this new deal put an end, once and for all, to the Buy America policy, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are pleased today that we are moving forward on a historic accord that stabilizes, secures and offers certainty to investors, to Canadian businesses, but mostly to workers and folks in the middle class. We have ended the uncertainty around trade in Canada, we have demonstrated that we can move forward and continue to grow our economy, drawing in global investment, being part of the global supply chains and being an integrated part in the North American market. This is a good day for Canada and it is a good day for Canadians.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question is very specific. The Prime Minister has made major concessions on key areas. He has made concessions on dairy, he has made concessions on auto quotas and he has made concessions on pharmaceuticals, meaning that Canadian patients will have to pay higher drug costs. We would have hoped that after making all those concessions, we would be able to see a gain on an important issue, like Buy American.

Can the Prime Minister confirm whether he has put an end to the Buy America policy in this deal?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past 13 months, we have been working extremely hard with the Americans and with the Mexicans to reach a new deal that would be good for Canadians. Despite what Stephen Harper recommended about six months ago, we were not ready to sign any old deal. We needed to sign a deal that is good for Canadians, and that is exactly what we did. We stood up for Canada, stood up for Canadians, and we got it done in the right way. I want to thank Canadians who have been united on this issue across all corners of the country and across all ideologies.

● (1420)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were united in wanting a good deal. The Prime Minister is trying to take credit for things that the Conservative Party had locked in over 25 years ago. There was no sunset clause, there was already a dispute resolution mechanism and now he has made major concessions on key sectors of the economy. Now we would like to see where the gains are.

One area that Canadians were very united in hoping to see an end to were the punishing tariffs on softwood lumber. Can the Prime Minister confirm whether his concessions have led to an end of the softwood lumber tariffs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to hear that the official opposition's official position seems to be that this is a bad deal. Canadians disagree. This is a good deal for Canada. It provides certainty and security as we move forward. We have ensured continued access to the North American market in a time of protectionism and we continue to know that as we engage with the United States in positive, constructive ways, we are going to keep putting Canadians' interests at the forefront of everything. This is not about politics; this is about prosperity for Canadians. That is where we stay focused.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are going to evaluate this deal to determine if it is a good deal, and one of the ways that we will be able to determine that is to find out where Canada gained.

We know where the Prime Minister has backed down. He has backed down to Donald Trump on dairy. He has backed down to Donald Trump on auto quotas. He has backed down to Donald Trump on pharmaceuticals, meaning Canadian patients will have to pay higher drug costs.

After making all of these concessions, we would like to know: Did he secure an end to the softwood lumber tariffs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will have to wait a little while to find out whether the official opposition thinks this is a good deal or a bad deal.

Canadians right across the country understand that securing access to a North American market and demonstrating that we could stand up for the rules-based order by having an intact chapter 19 is a good thing. Canadians understand that defending our cultural industries, including as they move to more digital, is a good thing. They understand that defending supply management as it continues is a good thing.

This is what Canadians expected. This is what we have delivered.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I recall that not so long ago the Prime Minister told us that he wanted a new, progressive NAFTA agreement promoting gender equality and indigenous rights. He even said in August 2017, "We are certainly looking for a better level playing field across North America on environmental protections". Instead of getting any gains in those areas, Canada made concessions on supply management, and the tariffs on steel and aluminum have not been lifted.

The Prime Minister promised he would rather sign no deal than a bad deal.

Why did he cave?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we got a good deal. More specifically, there are more measures to protect the environment in this agreement than in the one reached 25 years ago. This agreement includes penalties and severe consequences for failure to follow through on environmental commitments. That is something we were able to get in this deal. However, I understand that the NDP still does not like agreements and does not want to have any trade agreements with anyone in the world, including, it seems, the United States.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what we currently have is a NAFTA agreement, but with more Canadian concessions. For the third time in four years our farmers have been sacrificed to get a trade agreement even though the Prime Minister told us over and over and over again that he would defend supply management. What he did not say was that he would dismantle it. One breach, two breaches, three breaches and the system is taking on water everywhere. Even worse, the Americans will be able to continue subsidizing their agricultural industry with impunity before dumping their surplus goods here in Canada. The Prime Minister promised farmers that he would protect them and that he would defend supply management.

Why did he cave?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we protected supply management. After signing CETA, the CPTPP and now the USMCA, we have a process that protects and preserves our supply management system. Naturally, we will work with the dairy industry and dairy producers to ensure that there is compensation for the market share given to the U.S. However, we know that we have preserved supply management for future generations.

● (1425)

[*English*]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were worried we would not get a deal but today, many are worried about what we have given up to get this deal. This new deal looks nothing like the priorities the Liberals promised at the beginning of negotiations. Where is that progressive trade agenda?

The Liberals have made major concessions that will hurt Canadian dairy, poultry and egg farmers. They failed to get Trump's promised exemption on aluminum and steel tariffs. They have made access to medication even more expensive.

The Liberals promised a win-win-win. How can the Prime Minister give up so much and call this a win?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the NDP is not just opposed to all trade deals but especially progressive trade deals, which is a shame. What we have moved forward with in terms of labour standards in North America is historic in terms of protecting the rights of workers. What we have moved forward with on the environment is to strengthen environmental protections and real consequences within the accord that had never been done before.

We are moving forward on a deal that works for the middle class and people working hard to join it. That is at the heart of the progressive agenda of this government and of this progressive trade deal.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the lack of transparency throughout this whole process has been overwhelming. Canadians were promised transparency and expected transparency.

Our workers need to know exactly what their government has signed on to and how this will affect their livelihoods. They deserve to know that their jobs and our Canadian industries are protected.

I am still looking for that progressive trade agenda.

I have a simple question for the Prime Minister: Will he be transparent and bring this deal into Parliament for study, debate and a vote?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of credit given to this government for negotiating this deal, but I have to say that we owe a debt of gratitude to many stakeholders and industries across this country, including the Canadian Labour Congress and Unifor.

Jerry Dias and Hassan Yussuff have worked closely with us every step of the way to ensure that this deal could be the best possible one for workers, for labour and for Canadians. That is what we are going to continue to focus on. Of course, through the ratification process, we look forward to bringing this deal to Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every Canadian wants Canada to have a good agreement with the United States and Mexico. However, our dairy farmers and our steel, aluminum and softwood lumber industries remain in a precarious position.

We now know what the Prime Minister sacrificed to the American President. What Canadians want to know is what they actually stand to gain.

Can the Prime Minister tell us what economic benefits this agreement will bring to Canada? We are still trying to figure that out.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be clear. Canada succeeded because we were determined and we did not lose sight of our goal. Even when some people recommended that we capitulate, we knew that the new agreement had to be good for Canada and Canadians. That is exactly what we accomplished.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. The tariffs of 25% on steel and 10% on aluminum will remain. No deal has been reached on softwood lumber, and major concessions affecting Canada's agricultural industry were made as part of these negotiations.

Can the Prime Minister tell us whether an impact study was conducted to determine the effects of the concessions made to the American President?

If so, will he commit to tabling it here in the House?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to say one very important thing. Today, I want to thank the Canadian negotiators, who worked very hard. I also want to thank Steve Verheul, our chief negotiator. On behalf of all Canadians, I thank them for their hard work.

This agreement will be good for Canadian workers and businesses. It will also be good for Canadian families.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it would have been the goal of any competent government to bring an end to destructive Buy American policies that block Canadian workers and businesses from state and local projects south of the border, yet the government has backed down to Donald Trump on pharmaceuticals, with higher drug prices for Canadians; and has backed down on copyright, dairy and numerous other issues. Today so far, it has not been able to point to any victory on Buy American.

Can the minister confirm if Buy American will end with the signature of this deal?

● (1430)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a bit of a mystery here, because last week I think the Conservatives were urging us to capitulate. They were urging us to give in. This week, the Conservatives seem not to want to have a deal at all. Our government did exactly what we promised Canadians. We said we wanted a good deal, not just any deal, and a good deal is what we have.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, it is funny they would choose to use the word "capitulate" because capitulate is precisely what they have done. They have capitulated on pharmaceuticals, allowing Trump to force higher drug costs on Canadian patients to boost American drug company profits. They have capitulated by allowing caps on the growth of Canadian auto exports. They have capitulated on copyright and dairy.

What did they get in return for all of this capitulation? Did they get an end to Buy American, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the Conservatives seem to have discovered a lot of Monday morning courage, having counselled us throughout this negotiation that Canada take a softer line.

I think Canadians have seen that our government was determined to stand up for the national interest while being fair-minded and seeking reasonable compromise. That is exactly what we have done, and we got a good deal for Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member can misrepresent our position all she wants. I am trying to find out the position of the government.

We know that the Liberals backed down to Donald Trump by capping future growth of Canadian auto exports. They backed down to Donald Trump, forcing Canadians to pay higher prices for pharmaceuticals. We know they backed down on copyright, dairy and other policies. What did they get in return? Is there an end today to tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminium, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me challenge very clearly something that is simply wrong in what the hon. member said. This deal is great for the car sector. It is great for the car parts sector. That is why the share prices of our three leading car parts companies went up today. That is not a market response that says this deal is bad for our companies and workers. This is a deal that secures growth and investment in that crucial area, and we should all be proud we got it.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is funny that the Liberals are trying to take credit for things we have already had for 25 years. They are trying to take credit for something that was negotiated under a previous Conservative government. We know what they sacrificed, what they gave up, in backing down to Donald Trump: higher drug costs for Canadian consumers and higher profits for American companies. We know they gave up a lot to Donald Trump, but what about on softwood lumber? Tariffs have killed jobs in the forestry industry in Canada for a long time. Have they finally put an end to Trump's tariffs on softwood lumber, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me tell the member what we got for the softwood lumber industry. It is something called chapter 19. This dispute settlement mechanism is absolutely essential for our industry, and we —

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

[*Translation*]

I would ask the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent to restrain himself.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

● (1435)

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the United States, Mexico and Canada have a new trade deal, but people in my riding and other Quebec regions are feeling left out. The Liberals opened yet another breach in supply management, not just on dairy but also on poultry, and they did not even manage to get rid of the aluminum tariff.

Where did we come out ahead? Nowhere.

Can Quebec really count on the Liberals to protect the strategic sectors that are aluminum, agriculture and softwood lumber?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will start with supply management. We fully support our dairy farmers, their families and their communities. This agreement will open up access to markets, but the most important thing is that the future of supply management is secure. I also want to emphasize that our dairy farmers will receive fair and equitable compensation.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for months we have asked the Liberals if they would make concessions on supply management. Unfortunately, today we have our answer. Over 200,000 Canadian families depend on dairy, yet the current government just sacrificed domestic production. Our farmers are again on the hook for another country's overproduction problem. All five supply management sectors will take a serious hit, including chicken, turkey and eggs, making access to locally produced food more difficult, and increasing food safety concerns. The Prime Minister promised to protect supply management. Why did he break that promise?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the members opposite of where this negotiation started. This negotiation started with a U.S. demand that supply management be abolished entirely. Throughout the negotiation Canada was clear this was a political choice for Canadians and that only Canadians would make it. This deal preserves supply management. It preserves a secure food supply for Canadians.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Liberal government has the political, legal and moral authority to reverse the transfer of child killer Terri-Lynne McClintic to a healing lodge. The public safety minister knows the bureaucrats got it wrong, and it is his job to fix their mistakes. When will the minister, and the Prime Minister incidentally, do the right thing and put Tori Stafford's killer back behind bars?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said several times last week, Tori Stafford's brutal death in 2009 was a horrible gut-wrenching crime for the whole country. The killer, McClintic, was reclassified as medium security in 2014. The government of that day did not challenge that decision. In fact, McClintic remains in a medium security correctional facility today. I have asked the commissioner of corrections to examine the decision-making process to make sure that all policies were properly followed, and more than that, to ensure that the policies themselves are correct, and to identify —

The Speaker: The hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the killer was behind bars. Now the killer is enjoying life in a healing lodge after being convicted of the first degree murder of Tori. It is very clear and very simple actually. The government can give a policy direction, and the policy direction can include Terri-Lynne McClintic as the killer of Tori Stafford. When will the minister immediately give that direction in response to this outrageous transfer and reverse it for the people of Canada and the family of Tori Stafford?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issues involved in this case are being very carefully examined by the commissioner of the correctional service, subsequent to my request that she do so. I have asked her not only to look at the decision-making process to ensure that proper procedures and policies were followed, but also to look at the policies themselves and to report to me on whether those policies are in fact sufficient, proper and appropriate in the circumstances to protect public safety and to ensure that justice is done.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this weekend, in a letter to the Prime Minister, Tori Stafford's dad Rodney asked for one simple thing, that his daughter's killer be put back behind bars, where she was when we were in government.

Rodney wrote, "I really have to question our Federal Government as to why convicted child murderers, such as Terri Lynne McClintic, deserve more rights than their victims & law abiding Canadians?"

Tomorrow, we will be debating our motion calling on the Liberals to take action to ensure that this murderer is put back behind bars. Will the Liberals support our motion and will they act?

● (1440)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I look forward to reviewing in great detail the correspondence from the father of Tori Stafford. The hearts of all Canadians go out to him and other members of the family who have suffered such anguish. Obviously, the objective here is to ensure that justice is done, and to ensure that Canadians are always safe and secure. I have asked the commissioner of the correctional service to examine all of the facts of this case and all of the policies that were applied to ensure that the proper standards are adhered to.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has the authority today and the responsibility to do something about this injustice. For starters, as a government it can change the policy to ensure that this killer is put back behind bars. It can hide behind empty excuses, but ultimately the buck stops with the Prime Minister.

As Tori's dad said, "Obviously, every Canadian out there can tell you this is wrong." We agree with Tori's dad. Do the Liberals agree with Tori's dad? Will they act with the power and authority they have, and make this wrong right by putting Tori's killer back behind bars?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will await very anxiously the report that I have requested from the commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada. It is very important to proceed in this manner, in an appropriate, strong way. I will do that. I am waiting for her report. As soon as I get that report, I will take the appropriate action.

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[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, not only does the agreement between the United States, Mexico and Canada fail our agricultural producers, but it is also going to increase prescription drug prices for some chronic diseases such as arthritis. This is a really tough pill to swallow, especially considering that this is Seniors Week. Seniors are one of the most vulnerable groups in our society and are already struggling to pay for their medication.

Do we really need another Liberal study to bring in a national pharmacare program?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know how proud Canadians are of their public health care system. We continue to work with the provinces, territories and our partners to lower costs and ensure rapid access to prescription drugs. This issue is important to our government. We look forward to attracting new medical research to Canada. Our government will always stand up for our healthcare system.

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as if prescriptions were not expensive enough, this new NAFTA deal will make them even more expensive. This deal will increase drug costs for Canadians with arthritis, Crohn's disease and other chronic conditions. It will also increase the cost for drug plans by tens of millions of dollars every single year. By extending patents, Canadians are going to have to wait two more years before affordable generic drugs are available.

Since this new trade deal does not make prescription drugs more affordable, will the Liberals immediately introduce universal, affordable pharmacare for Canadians?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government knows how rightly proud Canadians are of our public health system. We are going to continue to work with provinces, territories and our partners to lower drug prices and provide timely access to medicines for all Canadians. We also look forward to attracting further medical research to Canada. Our government will always stand up for our public health care system.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October is Women's History Month in Canada. During this month we celebrate the many accomplishments of women and girls in our country and are encouraged to learn more about the remarkable women and girls who have advanced gender equality for everyone.

Could the Minister of Status of Women tell the House what our government is doing to honour the lives and legacies of courageous women and girls from coast to coast to coast throughout Canada's history?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his recent appointment to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. His efforts will no doubt contribute greatly to our government's daily efforts to advance gender equality and grow the middle class. During Women's History Month, we honour women in Canada's history who have paved the way for the rest of us and celebrate those whose stories shape history today.

To that end, our government is launching a new online resource to celebrate over 100 women of impact and we are also encouraging all Canadians, including members of the House, to use #makeanimpact and celebrate the story of a woman making a difference in their communities.

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● (1445)

[*Translation*]

JUSTICE

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals came to power in 2015, the woman who murdered eight-year-old Tori Stafford was locked up, behind bars, in prison. Today she is residing at a healing lodge, where children often stay for visits. It is unacceptable.

The Prime Minister is well aware that he is the only one that can reverse this decision.

Will the Prime Minister stand up for victims' rights and reverse this decision so that this murderer goes back behind bars?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, I have asked the commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada to examine all the details of this particular case, including the processes by which the decisions were taken and to ensure that those processes were followed, but more importantly to examine the policies themselves to determine if they are appropriate in order to keep Canadians safe and to ensure that justice is done. I will anxiously await her report.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Grand Valley Institution for Women is surrounded by a fence and razor wire. Inmates are kept behind bars. It is where Tori Stafford's killer was before she was transferred to the aboriginal healing lodge. Now, instead of being behind bars and surrounded by razor wire, Tori's killer is surrounded by trees and children.

Canadians want Tori's killer back in maximum security. Tori's father has pleaded with the Prime Minister to reverse this decision. For once, will the Prime Minister do the right thing and stand up for victims and their families instead of criminals?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the facts do not support the proposition that the hon. gentleman has just made.

In fact, the mother-child program exists in all of the women's institutions operated by the Correctional Service of Canada across this country. It applies at the location in Saskatchewan, which is medium and minimum security. It also applies at Grand Valley. It is exactly the same principle.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this year the Prime Minister and his justice minister condemned the verdict reached in a trial by jury in a high-profile murder trial.

They immediately involved the executive and legislative branch of government, and changed the structure of jury selection in Canada. However, in response to a gut-wrenching letter written to him by Mr. Stafford, asking him to put his daughter's murderers back behind bars, he is falsely claiming that he cannot do anything and is hiding behind the bureaucracy.

Why the double standard?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is proceeding in this matter in a very conscientious way to determine that justice is done and to ensure that the public is kept safe.

I look forward to responding to the father's letter. We extend to him our deepest sympathy, as do all Canadians, at the horrible crime that took his daughter's life.

We will ensure not only that the policies were properly applied in this case, but in fact that the policies themselves are re-examined to determine that they are absolutely as effective as they possibly can be.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that says "hiding behind the bureaucracy" rather than doing the job.

I want to correct the record on something. There is something different about this lodge, outside of the razor wire and everything that the previous institution had. The Integrity Commissioner actually criticized this lodge because, very recently, its employees had been bringing their children to work there.

Why will the Prime Minister not do the right thing, respond to Mr. Stafford and put this deranged woman back behind bars?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is vitally important in the correctional system of Canada that sound, strong rules be in place to ensure that Canadians are kept safe, that justice is done and that the proper results are achieved for all Canadians.

We have asked for the review. The review is under way, not only of the decision-making process but of the policies themselves. As soon as we have the report from that review, we will be anxious to review it and to act upon it.

* * *

● (1450)

PENSIONS

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, eight months ago, the Liberals announced they would hold consultations about improving pension security for Canadian workers in case of bankruptcy or insolvency. However, no plans or consultations have been announced.

Does the government not understand that 18,000 Sears retirees just lost a third of their pension, and that could happen again to others if we do not change the law?

Workers and retirees in this country deserve better. Why is the government refusing to stand up for Canadian workers and retirees, and their pensions? Why is the Minister of Seniors not stepping up to the plate on this important issue?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Seniors for her leadership on this file. She understands how important it is to support retirement security.

She is one of the key members, along with so many members in our government, who helped strengthen the Canada pension plan. She also advocated and strengthened the expanded wage earner protection program.

In the 2018 budget, we provided a road map that would include a whole-of-government approach when it comes to strengthening our pensions. We are committed to workers and pensions. It is a priority for our government.

Oral Questions

SENIORS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian seniors are active in their communities, contributing so much to society, yet too many are being left behind. Families struggle to support their elderly loved ones. Seniors poverty is on the rise. Too many are left to decide between buying food or buying medication.

In the very near future, one in four Canadians will be 65 or older, making it critical for Canada to have a concrete plan moving forward. Seniors cannot wait. When will the Prime Minister commit to a national seniors strategy?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say to all of our seniors listening today, happy Seniors Day.

Our government took action immediately as soon as we came into government to lower the eligibility age from 67 back to 65 for OAS and GIS. In addition to that, we increased the GIS for the most vulnerable seniors by almost $1,000 per year. We also invested $6 billion for home care and palliative care.

When it comes to our seniors, they have worked hard for us and we will continue to work hard for them.

* * *

VETERANS

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mario Bonafacio is a 79-year-old veteran who served Canada for 35 years. He suffered from a debilitating neck injury incurred during his military service. He has asked for support from Veterans Affairs. His claim was rejected. He appealed. The department has been fighting him ever since. In the minister's mandate letter it states that, "Veterans should not have to fight their own government for the support and compensation they have earned." Mr. Bonafacio is tired of fighting his own government.

When will the Minister of Veterans Affairs make sure this veteran gets the support he deserves?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed we are committed to the well-being of each one of our veterans and I invite the hon member to bring this to my further attention. We will see if we can get to the bottom of that particular case.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at this point, we still do not know whether the government has terminated the benefits being extended to Mr. Garnier, a criminal who never served. Then the Minister of Veterans Affairs humiliated Mr. Bruyea, a well-respected veteran. Now the chairman of the National Council of Veterans Associations of Canada, Mr. Forbes, is calling the new pension for life program a betrayal of the commitment the Prime Minister made to our brave soldiers.

When will the government start honouring its commitments? When will it start respecting our veterans?

[*English*]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to the family of Constable Campbell.

As I have said, I reviewed the findings and directed my department to ensure that the services received by a family member of a veteran are related to the veteran's service, and where they are not, that the case be reviewed by a senior official to address its policy in relation to providing treatment to family members under extenuating circumstances, such as conviction of a serious crime. This will add extra scrutiny to a policy that has existed since 2012.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the National Council of Veteran Associations has confirmed that the Liberals have betrayed veterans and that veteran Sean Bruyea was right all along.

The Liberals are also deliberately blocking ill and injured veterans from accessing the career transition service. However, when murderer Chris Garnier applies for veterans benefits, they put him at the front of the line.

Why does the government attack veterans and put the needs of murderers ahead of them?

● (1455)

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, for privacy reasons we cannot comment on the details of this case. I will say, though, that unlike the Harper Conservatives, we do understand that when a veteran serves, their entire family serves with them. We take their mental health and the mental health of the family very seriously. That is why we have opened a new centre of excellence on PTSD. It is why we have launched a joint suicide prevention strategy.

Let me implore veterans in need of mental health supports that we will give them the resources needed when needed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government knows how important community-based mental health initiatives are. We also recognize that the various communities in Canada, in this case, black Canadians, are all unique.

Can the Minister of Health tell the House what our government is doing to promote health and mental health equity among black Canadians?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague from Bourassa for his important question and his work on this file. Our government has invested more than $5 billion over 10 years to help the provinces and territories improve access to mental health services. Last week, I announced an investment of $10 million to improve understanding of mental health for black Canadian youth, their families and communities in order to strengthen informed policies, programs, and interventions. This was some good news last week.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to a question in New York this week, the Prime Minister admitted to knowing that foreign money had influenced the 2015 federal election. Bill C-76 was supposed to close the loopholes in the election legislation, but it does nothing to stop foreign money from influencing our elections.

When is the Prime Minister going to take this issue seriously and stop foreign interests from influencing our elections?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

It is vital that everyone in the House work together to avoid and prevent foreign influence and interference in our elections.

[*English*]

I am excited to work with everyone in the House to make sure we pass Bill C-76. In Bill C-76 are tangible measures to ensure we can prevent foreign interference. I hope my colleagues on the other side will work with us to get this legislation passed quickly to ensure that our next elections are protected.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals told the House over and over that they would defend our supply management system. They have broken that promise.

Once again, dairy, egg and poultry farmers are on the losing end. Let us do the math. The Liberals gave up 3% in CETA, 3.25% in the trans-Pacific Partnership, and nearly 4% to the United States. That means about 10% of the dairy market has been given up in under three years.

Could the Prime Minister explain why he is putting our family farms in jeopardy by signing such bad trade deals?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government worked very hard to defend Canadians' interests. Our government defended our supply management system from the U.S. government's determined attempts to dismantle it. We are the party that implemented the supply management system, and we are the party that will defend it.

I want to assure dairy farmers that they will receive fair and equitable compensation.

[*English*]

HOUSING

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, nearly one-third of all Canadians rely on rental housing for a safe, affordable place to call home. Could the minister responsible for housing tell Canadians how this government's investments in the rental construction financing initiative will increase the amount of affordable rental housing options for middle-class families struggling in expensive housing markets across Canada?

● (1500)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak on World Habitat Day.

I thank my colleague from Kitchener Centre for his hard work toward securing a $2 million investment from the rental construction financing initiative, which will give 20 families in Kitchener a safe and affordable place to live.

This is all part of the national housing strategy, a 10-year plan that is re-establishing federal leadership and partnership in housing.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said at the United Nations that there was not that much foreign interference in the last federal election in Canada. The Conservatives think that any interference is too much.

Could the Prime Minister tell us how much is not that much, because, according to Canadians, not that much is too much?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree with our colleagues across the way that there should not be any foreign interference. That is why I ask them to work with us at the procedure and House affairs committee to send Bill C-76 back to the House as soon as possible so we can pass the legislation to ensure that our elections are protected next election.

Let us work together. I hope my hon. colleagues across the way will get this done with us.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Simon Marcil (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a year ago almost to the day the House unanimously called on the government to ensure that there would be no breaches in supply management if a new NAFTA deal were reached.

Instead of telling the Americans that Parliament had agreed no concessions would be made, the government gave up its negotiating power, contradicted the House, reneged on its word and completely caved.

Knowing that Donald Trump's threats were nothing but hot air because Congress did not support tearing up NAFTA, why did the government once again sacrifice Quebec?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we fully support our dairy producers, their families and their communities. It was a Liberal government that created the supply management system and it is a Liberal government that is preserving it.

This agreement will provide access to markets, but the most important thing is that the future of supply management is not in question.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is not the case for diafiltered milk.

In both the agreement with Europe and the TPP, Quebec's farmers were sacrificed to make gains for Canada. When Donald Trump withdrew from the TPP, the government did not renegotiate anything. It left the same breach in supply management. It told everyone not to worry about it and that the Americans would have to re-enter the TPP to have access to the concessions. The truth of the matter is that Quebec is paying three times: once for Europe, once for the TPP and once for NAFTA. After three strikes, we are out.

What good are the 40 Liberal MPs from Quebec when all they do is trample on Quebec's interests?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government worked very hard to defend Canadians' interests. Our government defended our supply management system from the U.S. government's determined attempts to dismantle it. We were able to preserve, protect and defend our supply management system throughout the CETA, TPP and NAFTA negotiations.

* * *

[*English*]

POINTS OF ORDER

DECORUM

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure all members of the House are aware that while the House is in session, they are not allowed to take pictures. I note that there has been at least one member of the New Democratic Party who has done so. I believe it has been posted. I just wanted to raise it as a point of order, and perhaps that individual would take down the picture if it is on social media.

Also, Mr. Speaker, perhaps you could just remind members that while we are in session, they are not supposed to be taking pictures with their smart phones.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for raising the point. Members should be aware that they are not allowed to take photographs in the House while it is in session. Certainly I would look very dimly on such activity, so I would encourage them to remove any such photographs.

[*Translation*]

Does the hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert wish to respond to this point of order?

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I will take down the picture, but I have no regrets about drawing attention to the fact that dairy farmers in Quebec—

The Speaker: Order. Apparently, the hon. member does not want to obey the rules of the House of Commons. He should think about that and consider apologizing to me personally.

The hon. member for Montcalm on a point of order.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. On September 26, 2017, the House unanimously adopted the following motion:

> That the House reiterate its desire to fully preserve supply management during the NAFTA renegotiations.

Everyone knows that, yesterday, the government concluded a new agreement with the United States. By so doing, the government dismissed out of hand the unanimous will—

● (1505)

The Speaker: Order. I must remind the hon. member for Montcalm that, according to the Standing Orders and practices of the House, prior notice of at least one hour must be given to raise a question of privilege. Since I have still not received any such notice, we must move on to other things for the time being. The hon. member will have the opportunity to raise his question of privilege later if he provides notice.

The hon. member for Montcalm on another point of order.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, a question of privilege must be raised as soon as the breach occurs. I could not inform you a day or an hour in advance because I did not hear the government confirm what was reported in the media. Then I had to wait until question period to have the opportunity to rise today. It was therefore impossible to give an hour's notice. You are the guardian of parliamentarians' speaking time, and independent members get very little of that. It seems to me that you could at least wait until the end of my remarks, which are not even a minute long.

The Speaker: The hon. member has not given me any indication that it was something that occurred during question period. Perhaps it has to do with issues addressed during question period, but not something that occurred during that time. I understand that the matter is urgent to the member, but the rules and practices of the House require prior notice of at least one hour. I therefore maintain the same position.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, entitled "A Vision for Cultural Hubs and Districts in Canada". This is an important step moving forward in building our cultural communities and cultural industries across our country.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 50th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, entitled "Report 7, Consular Services to Canadians Abroad—Global Affairs Canada, of the 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada".

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

* * *

● (1510)

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition on the subject of human rights.

[*English*]

Human rights are routinely violated in the People's Republic of China, particularly of those who practise Falun Gong. These petitioners ask for the government to act and condemn the illegal arrest of a Canadian citizen, Sun Qian, for her practice of Falun Gong and call for her immediate release. She was illegally kidnapped in the People's Republic of China in February 2017.

CANADA POST

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today. The first is a petition in support of postal banking because nearly two million Canadian desperately need an alternative to payday lenders because of the crippling lending rates that affect poor, marginalized, rural and indigenous communities. We have 3,800 Canada Post outlets already in existence in these rural areas, where there are few or no banks and credit unions. Moreover, Canada Post has infrastructure that could make a rapid transition to include postal banking.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to enact my motion, Motion No. 166, to create a committee to study and propose a plan for postal banking under the Canada Post Corporation.

HOUSING

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is in regard to the affordability crisis Canadians are facing with housing and other costs in their daily

lives. First and foremost, Canadians are indeed struggling with unaffordable housing, child care, precarious and unreliable work, and shrinking opportunities, particularly among our young. Household debt is at a terrible high and costs keep rising. Instead of helping people, the Liberal government has continued to invest in the wealthy and well-connected.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to invest in affordable housing now, not at some distant time, and to take concrete measures to address out-of-control housing markets, protect good-paying jobs and take actions that will support and benefit those who are struggling.

[*Translation*]

LANGUAGE PROFESSIONS

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present petition e-1540, initiated by Vladyslav Pashynskyy on behalf of members of the community of language professionals, students, colleagues and allies working in various fields.

They are seeking the government's help to improve working conditions for language professionals. This would be achieved through the creation of internships and jobs and by promoting respect for the profession from clients and employers.

This petition was launched in February 2018 and has more than 500 signatures.

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, because bulk commercial anchorages anchored endlessly in the southern Salish Sea are risking oil spills, creating noise and light pollution, risking migratory bird species and herring spawn by dragging anchor, petitioners from across the region from Whistler, Pemberton, Vancouver, Qualicum, Ladysmith, Nanaimo and Gabriola urge the House not to establish new bulk commercial anchorages. These messages were reinforced at a round table I hosted with the MP for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford on Friday. Many many coastal communities are urging the House to take action.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to table a petition on behalf of Vancouver Islanders from Nanoose Bay, Parksville, Qualicum Beach and Coombs, who are seeing more and more plastic washing upon our shores and infecting the very marine species we rely on for our food security and to sustain ourselves.

I am honoured to table this petition. Petitioners are calling on the government to create regulations aimed at reducing plastic debris discharge, industrial use of microplastics; permanent, dedicated and annual funding for the cleanup of derelict fishing gear; community-led projects to clean up plastics and marine debris on our shores to mitigate the impact this plastic is having on our ecosystem; education and outreach campaigns on the root causes and negative environmental effects of plastic pollution; and most of all, to redesign the plastic economy. They are calling on the Government of Canada to adopt my motion, Motion No. M-151, to establish a national strategy to combat plastic pollution from entering our waterways.

* * *

● (1515)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-77, an act to amend the National Defence Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil has 13 minutes remaining.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a correction. Just before question period I referred to the situation in Truro, Nova Scotia. I referred to Constable Campbell as "Christine" and not "Catherine". It is easy to get confused, as a good friend of mine—

The Deputy Speaker: I think the interpretation is not working. We will wait until the audio interpretation is working on both channels.

The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, if my French were a bit better, then we would not need the interpretation, but I am working on it.

I do want to clarify something I was saying just before question period. I mentioned the situation regarding the Truro police officer Catherine Campbell and I referred to her as "Christine" Campbell, not "Catherine" Campbell. A good friend of mine is named Christine Campbell and it is easy for me to think in those terms.

Let me go back to question period today. Members of the official opposition, including me, again asked several government members and the public safety minister about the situation with respect to Tori Stafford and the fact that her killer has been moved to an aboriginal healing centre.

In the context of speaking of a victims bill of rights, I cannot believe for the life of me that the government is tripling down on this situation. Tomorrow we will be presenting an opposition day motion to deal with this situation, because Canadians are so outraged by this. Over the weekend, Tori Stafford's father issued a letter to the Prime Minister begging him to reverse this decision, which we are going to ask the government to do tomorrow.

It is my hope that the government will not quadruple down on this and will instead do the right thing. Canadians are outraged by this entire situation. They are outraged that the killer would be allowed to be placed not behind bars and razor wire, but instead be surrounded by trees at an aboriginal healing centre where there are children as well.

The minister tried to answer the question by saying that there are children at the Grand Valley Institution. The fact is that the Grand Valley Institution is entirely surrounded by fences and razor wire and the inmates are in pods behind bars.

The minister is suggesting that the two institutions are the same. One is a medium maximum security prison and the other is a medium minimum security prison. By the minister suggesting that they are similar, he is not being frank with Canadians, and that needs to be clarified.

When I was on the veterans affairs committee, we often dealt with the issue of PTSD and the impact that it has on our serving members. Quite a few forces members came before that committee and spoke about sexual assault and the impact it has. This again relates to Bill C-77. We had quite lengthy discussions at the veterans affairs committee over this and how it relates specifically to military justice and the Canadian justice system.

Bill C-77 is a cut-and-paste version of what the previous Conservative government introduced in Bill C-71 at the end of its mandate in 2015.

The purpose of Bill C-77 is to align the military justice system of Canada with the Criminal Code of Canada. The bill would do this in a number of ways, such as enshrining a victims bill of rights in the National Defence Act.

The Victims Bill of Rights was quite a comprehensive document. The intent of the previous government was, in contrast to the current government, to look after victims and their families to make sure that within the criminal justice system they were looked after. The emphasis in the Victims Bill of Rights was not on criminals but on the victims.

This piece of legislation would enshrine the Victims' Bill of Rights into the National Defence Act, putting a statute of limitations of six months on summary hearing cases and clarifying what cases should be handled by a summary hearing. Bill C-71 would have instituted these changes as well had it passed the previous Parliament.

The main difference between this legislation and Bill C-71 is the addition of the Gladue decision into the National Defence Act. This addition will mean that aboriginal members of the Canadian Forces facing charges under the National Defence Act would face lighter punishments and special consideration if convicted.

● (1520)

We have heard on this side of the House during the debate all day that it could result in sentences that are less harsh versus other CAF members, so the question of fairness comes into it. Members could undermine operational discipline, morale and anti-racism policies.

The vast majority of Bill C-77 is based on the previous Conservative government's bill. We are going to support this bill, but we are going to seek some amendments at the committee stage. Excuse the cynicism, but it is our hope that this bill and some of those amendments that come at committee will be looked at by the government side. I know that we will have lots of stakeholders who come to committee. There will be recommendations from those stakeholders, including first nations communities and other advocates for military justice and civil justice in this country. It is our hope that the government will listen to all the information that comes forward and will deal with some of those considerations. Again, the government has not shown that commitment in the past to being open to many of the recommendations, not just from the Conservative side but from the NDP side as well. We are hoping that the Liberals will do that.

The previous bill had hundreds of consultations. They had stakeholders. Victims and members of communities came forward and spoke to Bill C-71. We landed at a good place with that piece of legislation. However, the Gladue decision certainly made changes to that.

I am fortunate, as you are, Mr. Speaker, to be close to a military base, base Borden, or camp Borden, as it was known in the past. In the time I have spent at base Borden and with base commander Atherton, as well as Chief Warrant Officer Charette, many people who serve have come and gone. When I was the critic for veterans affairs, I used to travel across the country meeting with military members, veterans and stakeholders and their families. The first question I would ask when I was in front of them was how many had gone through base Borden, and the hands would go up. It is the largest training base in Canada. I used to ask how many were at camp Borden, and some hands would go up, and I would say to those people, boy, they were old, because it has not been camp Borden for a while.

It is an integral part of our community, and those members who are placed at base Borden, as Canada's largest training base, come from all over the country. In fact, they come from all over the world to train in languages and other disciplines. I am quite honoured to be able to represent an area that has a military base like base Borden. In fact, there are thousands of people who live in my riding who are stationed at the base and work there in either a military or civilian capacity. They are truly heroes, in my mind.

I try to spend as much time at the base as I can. I was there last week when the United Nations peacekeepers were in town. They were holding their biannual meeting, and I was there for a speech at the base. I went there for dinner and then there was a ceremony at Peacekeepers' Park in Angus.

It plays an important role in our community, and not just an economic role. The connection to the base is one that is valued and cherished, so supporting our military members at all levels, including with this piece of legislation, is critical in what we do here in Parliament as parliamentarians.

In conclusion, I would say that Bill C-77 is an important piece of legislation. We are supportive of this bill proceeding to committee. We think it needs some work and some scrutiny. Therefore, I hope that when it gets to committee, the majority Liberal side will take some of these concerns we have and that stakeholders have and implement this to make it a better piece of legislation.

● (1525)

I would be remiss if I did not speak about something that was a passion of mine. I am really disappointed that it never received support from Parliament. It received support from this side and the NDP side, but not from the government side. It is Bill C-378, which was a private member's bill I proposed about having a military covenant with our military members. We would have been only the second country in the world to establish such a covenant, behind Great Britain, and unfortunately, the government side did not support it. It related specifically to the sacrifice made by veterans. It is something I was very proud to present, and I was very sorry to see that it did not pass through this Parliament.

However, there is hope, because at our policy convention in Halifax just a few short weeks ago, members of the Conservative Party made it a point to ensure that as a matter of policy, a military covenant would be established between our veterans and the people of this country who owe them so much.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I look forward to voting in favour of this bill with the member for Barrie—Innisfil. My question is more specifically about when we might have the opportunity to do that.

The Liberal Party has stopped putting up members to speak to this, because we feel that it is ready to go to committee for the fulsome discussion it deserves at committee before coming back to the House. Would the member agree with me that now is a good time to vote in favour of this so we can actually get on with the long-awaited outcome to this extremely long journey that has spanned multiple governments?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, to answer the hon. member's question, I will go back to the throne speech issued by the Governor General at the time. It talked about the democracy of Parliament and allowing members to speak on issues important to their constituents. The answer is right there, and if the hon. member wants to go back, he can look at the throne speech.

The government has shown a habit of dropping the hammer through time allocation when it wants to rush its legislation through, but for us on this side, this is an important piece of legislation. As I said earlier, like me, many of my colleagues who are speaking today have a military connection, either through the community or through family. We are talking about establishing a victims bill of rights in the Canadian military, and if Liberals do not want to talk about victims' rights and just want this to go to committee without fulsome debate in Parliament, I am not surprised.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing to see the Conservative Party rag the puck in speech after speech with essentially the exact same talking points. Seeing as the Conservative Party is in favour of this, it would be nice to proceed forward.

However, we are carrying on with debate, and I would like to ask the hon. member about one of the new items in this particular bill versus the bill from the previous Parliament. It is under proposed section 162.92, and it deals with sentencing factors. I am wondering if the hon. member is in favour of this addition:

> (ii) the service infraction was motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression, or on any other similar factor

Does the hon. member agree that this is a good addition to the bill? Will we have his support as this goes forward?

● (1530)

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, that represents the reason, as I stated before, this has to go to committee. It is so we can have a fulsome discussion on this issue. The hon. member is snickering on the other side, but we are going to have our say. We are going to have our debate on this issue. We are going to talk about it because, as I said earlier, it is important.

This is a government that wants an audience, not an opposition. We are sitting here talking about the issues that are important within the context of this bill. If the Liberals do not want to hear it, that is typical of the government side. We will get this to committee and have these types of discussions. That is the way the process works around here.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can hardly wait for the day we get a member representing St. Catharines who asks some intelligent questions, as Krystina Waler will when she becomes the next member of Parliament for St. Catharines.

The member for Barrie—Innisfil has done a fabulous job in articulating the many problems with the government today. As much as Bill C-77 follows up on the legislation we brought forward in the last Parliament under Bill C-71, we have a lot of questions about the way the government actually treats victims in Canada. It always wants to hug a thug rather than stand up for victims' rights.

Even though we are enshrining victims' rights in the National Defence Act, as the previous Conservative government did in the Criminal Code when it made sure that the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights was passed by Parliament, I would love to hear from the member for Barrie—Innisfil about some of the concerns he has about how the Liberals have made crime in this country easier to commit, with less punishment, and how victims' rights have actually been eroded.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, that is a terrific question. All we have to do is look at the evidence of the government, via its actions. This is a government, and I have said this many times in this House, that loves governing by Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook, because with those 140 characters, or 280 now, and the way it controls them, it can really manipulate the message.

However, the way the government actually conducts itself on issues of victims and supporting criminals, there is evidence after evidence, as has been going through the House over the last couple weeks, with the Tori Stafford situation, the Catherine Campbell situation in Truro, Nova Scotia, and Omar Khadr. The list goes on and on.

This weekend I was speaking to the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. We were talking specifically about Bill C-71, which is the government's new gun registry, its answer, supposedly, to solving the gangs and criminal activity situation. In fact, what the government is doing is actually going after law-abiding firearms owners in this country.

It gives the government and the Liberal MPs a chance to go to their municipalities and say that the government is doing something tough on crime, but in fact, what it is doing is penalizing the wrong people. It is not solving a problem that exists in this country.

Bill C-75 is another example of that, with the amendments to the Criminal Code and the summary convictions, taking some of the most egregious and heinous crimes in this country and reducing them to a slap on the wrist, because the government has an inability to put judges in place to deal with the backlogs in the courts. The government would rather see criminals go free than criminals go to jail. That is the way these Liberals operate.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member did not really answer my question or the question from the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands but wants to talk about a completely different issue, which is Bill C-75. I will ask a question about that and hopefully get an answer.

The previous government, in power for 10 years, did nothing with a particular hybrid offence, which is sexual assault, which I think we would all agree is one of the worst offences in the Criminal Code. Why did the former government not do anything about that? That is question one.

If the member cannot answer that, is he opposed to the changes in Bill C-75 because he does not trust police officers or Crown prosecutors to give the right charge in the right circumstances?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, I do not trust the Liberals to make the right decision when it comes to protecting victims of crimes as opposed to criminals. Again, I go back to the hon. member talking about sexual assault. Tomorrow he is going to have an opportunity to vote on an opposition day motion to look at and make sure that the killer of Tori Stafford is returned behind bars and razor wire. That was a heinous crime. It was an egregious crime. Canadians are outraged.

Tomorrow this member has an opportunity to ask the government to bring Ms. McClintic back to the maximum security prison, as opposed to the aboriginal healing centre. I sure hope he supports that motion.

●(1535)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, given the way the current Liberal government treats our veterans, let alone serving members, specifically around the promised pension for life, given that scenario and what has transpired, can the member further expand on why it is important that we slow the ball down on Bill C-77, let it get to committee and study it there?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, there is no greater example of the Liberals' contempt for veterans than the promises they made. We are finding out, and of course, we did not just find out three years into it, we found out shortly after, that the Liberals had no intention of keeping those promises.

When we get to committee, we can have a fulsome discussion on this particular piece of legislation. We can find out what the communities are thinking about and what stakeholders are thinking about, and we can certainly find out what other groups are thinking about and how it particularly applies to the issues at stake here.

Let us get it to committee, and we will do that, once we have a proper debate on this issue.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for being so interested in this issue. I heard the Liberals say that they wanted this to leave the House immediately, but some of us do not have a lot of chance to speak to bills that are outside of our portfolio area. I am not on the defence committee, so that is not a place where I will be able to participate. Therefore, this is my sole chance to participate in this debate.

I hope my colleagues opposite understand that we are not ragging the puck here. We just want to give people an opportunity to speak to the issues.

These are important issues that come out of a number of different areas. I want to talk later about the Victims Bill of Rights, what it means and how much it has improved and changed the lives of Canadians. That has been the foundation of what we are doing. Bill C-77 tries to apply that bill of rights to the military as well.

My colleague who spoke previously basically had the same opening as I did. He talked about imitation being the sincerest form of flattery. It is interesting that on the things the government has succeeded in, it has had to copy us. The things the Liberals have not copied us on have been pretty much a disaster. If we think about electoral reform and so on, their own initiatives have not gone anywhere. However, the ones we had done the work on and laid the foundation and the groundwork for, the Liberals have had some success.

Apart from this bill, I think of things like CETA, the trade agreement with Europe, which was pretty much handed to the Liberals, but they almost messed that up. They took it back and started messing with some of the text. The next thing was the Europeans wanted to open that whole agreement up again. The government had to fight and struggle to ensure it was implemented the way that we had negotiated it.

We are seeing the same thing with TPP. The agreement basically was finished and handed to the Liberals. We are sitting here two and a half years later and still do not have it through the House even though we were the ones who did the work on it. It is a good agreement and it should be implemented as soon as possible.

We saw the struggles the Liberals had around NAFTA, where they insisted on taking the agreement that worked very well and came so close to making a complete mess of it. Canadians need to understand that we were saved at the last minute by the fact that the U.S. auto sector stepped in and said that it needed to get the agreement done, that the negotiators could not be serious if they allowed the President to put tariffs on autos. Finally, our government realized it had better quit playing games, trying to make the President look bad, fooling around that way, and decided to get the agreement done.

Interestingly enough, the Liberals really did not gain anything with it. It barely held the ground that we had in the past. That seems to be the way the government operates.

That brings us back to Bill C-77, hopefully something that will be much easier for the Liberals to get through in the form it is in right now. We have heard debate about it. At this point, we will support the bill at second reading to go to committee as soon as the debate is done in the House. The point of it is to align the military justice system of Canada with the Criminal Code of Canada. It is a good and important objective. As I said before, it centres around the Victims Bill of Rights that was passed in 2015. It takes that and enshrines it in the National Defence Act.

Many people talked specifically about Bill C-77 and what is included in it. However, I would like to back up a step and talk about the Victims Bill of Rights, which lays the foundation for the discussion we are having today and for the bill that is being presented here today.

Obviously, the Victims Bill of Rights created a clear set of rights for victims of crime. It requires those rights to be considered during the trial processes and it provides four rights for victims in Canada. Those rights are the ideas of information, protection for their rights of participation in the system and then some aspect of restitution.

Some of it seems to be common sense, but perhaps is not in the courts. Canadians will understand that every victim should have the right to request information that he or she needs with respect to the system and the role the victims play in that, the services and programs that are available to them. Victims should be aware of the fact that they have the right to file complaints if their rights are being violated.

In investigations, victims have the right to ask about the status and outcome of the investigations. They have the right to know where the location of the proceedings are taking place. They have the right to ask for information about any kind of reviews that are being done under the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

● (1540)

For the last week we have been talking about an issue in western Canada, actually in my riding. A young "lady", and I use that word very loosely, participated in the kidnapping, rape, torture, murder and burial of an eight-year-old girl. She was convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to 25 years in prison. Then about a week ago we found out she had been moved from a maximum security prison to medium security prison a couple of years ago. In the last few weeks, she was moved to what was basically a minimum security prison.

I am familiar with the Okimaw Ohci healing lodge. It is in my riding and I have been there several times. I have been there for its open days and have enjoyed going there. However, this is not the appropriate place for someone like that.

As I pointed out, the rights of victims require that those who have suffered have the opportunity to find out what is going on in the system. When Tori Stafford's father found out what had happened, he appealed to the Prime Minister. He said that it was crazy. The person had murdered his daughter and he had to live with that every day of his life. He said that the Prime Minister had sent her to a minimum security prison. Not only was it not a prison, but it was in a treed area. It was like a park setting with small cabins arranged in small units. Not only did it not have a fence around, or have restrictions or whatever, but children were allowed to go and spend time with their mothers.

My constituents have made their opinions clear to me. They agree with our position over the last week that this needs to be reversed.

The reason we know about it is because there is a Victims Bill of Rights and that is the foundation for the changes being suggested in Bill C-77.

Victims are allowed to attend hearings that are open. With respect to protection and security, people have the right to have their security considered. In the criminal justice system, they have the right to protection from intimidation and retaliation. We have talked about that today in regard to Bill C-77. They have the right to have their privacy considered and having their identity protected as well. They also have the right to request any kind of help they might need when appearing as witnesses in proceedings.

There are other things around participation. Victims have the right to give their views about decisions to be made by the appropriate authorities in the criminal justice system that affect their rights. They have the right to speak up. We think that is an important right.

We are all familiar with victim impact statements and the role they play. In some court cases, victims are allowed to give victim impact statements, how the criminal impacted their lives, how this activity has destroyed, for example, the lives of their families.

The Victims Bill of Rights also talks about restitution orders and the fact that victims have the right to have the court consider making restitution to them by the offender.

There are a number of other things in the Victims Bill of Rights, but that lays the foundation for us for Bill C-77. The bill is about enshrining that Victims Bill of Rights in the National Defence Act. It also puts a statute of limitations of six months on summary hearing cases.

We heard this morning about the various levels of discipline and how the defence minister , if we trust him, was trying to make some changes that would speed up some of the discipline cases on lesser offences. We are hoping that what the Liberals are saying is actually true.

This is virtually a copy of something that was presented three years ago by the former Conservative government just before the last election. I guess the good thing is, as I mentioned, the Liberals have taken this on and have decided that they are going to bring the bill forward in much the same fashion and structure that it was before and introduce those changes.

There are some differences. We have talked a bit about them as well. One of the main differences in this bill, and probably will be one of the main things that will be discussed at committee, is the addition of the Gladue decision in the National Defence Act. For those people who are not familiar with that, it instructs the courts to take into consideration an aboriginal person's background when he or she is sentenced. On occasion, when that is applied, it may mean that the sentencing itself or the sentencing process will be different for that individual than it would be for a non-aboriginal person.

● (1545)

People have questioned whether this should be considered in the military. Is it appropriate that in the military, where everyone is subject to the same structures of discipline, where we try to bring about equality and equal participation, someone would have a different sentencing structured or a different level of punishment than other people would based on these kinds of considerations? I am sure we will be bringing forward those issues and asking those questions at committee.

Our government made it a priority to stand up for victims. That is why we brought forward the Victims Bill of Rights. That is also why we saw our Bill C-71 come forward prior to the election, in pretty much the form being presented by the current government. We know that the priority of government, on this side of the House anyway, should be to protect the safety of its citizens. We take that responsibility very seriously.

Putting the rights of victims back into the centre of the criminal justice system was important to us. It was something we spoke about many times and made it the centre of a number of different pieces of legislation, the guarantee that victims would have the right to have a more effective voice in the system and that they would be treated with courtesy and compassion. I think we are all familiar with situations in the past years where often victims seemed to be harassed more than they were treated with compassion and respect when they came forward with charges. We were determined to try to reverse that trend and ensure people were treated with respect, while keeping our streets, our cities and communities safe for Canadians and their families. That was why we took so many concrete steps to hold people accountable for their actions. We are glad to see this being extended to the military as well.

The question I need to ask is this. Are the Liberals really serious about this bill? They say that they want it to go to committee as soon as possible, and we hope that is true. However, what we have seen in the past is that they are far more interested in PR when it comes to issues of criminal activity than they are in the content. We see that in this Parliament.

I think of Bill C-71, the firearms legislation. The bill has come forward. The government has made a declaration that it wants to deal with the crimes with respect to gangs and the illegal use of firearms. The bill does not mention either of those things but creates massive problems for legitimate firearms owners. It is almost as if the Liberals looked at what the PR side of it was, decided they could make it an attack on legitimate firearms owners, convince the media country that it was a good thing and they did not have to do the hard work of trying to solve the gang situation and getting illegal guns off the street.

Bill C-71 is an example of where the Liberals do not seem to take this issue of crime seriously. I hope they are with respect to Bill C-77. I asked a question of the minister this morning and I trust he answered it honestly.

With respect to Bill C-71, another issue we had was the misuse of statistics. The Liberals take an extreme statistic, apply it, then say that is the average and that they will operate using that as a starting point. However, anyone who knows the statistics knows that the year they were using, 2013, was such an exceptional year and it did not really fit into the normal trend. There is a lot of attack on regular citizens it seems, particularly in Bill C-71, and not much that would actually protect victims of crime.

We brought forward a number of other bills when we were in government: the Safe Streets and Communities Act; the reform of the not criminally responsible legislation, which was needed for many years, and we were happy to bring that forward; and the laws against sexual exploitation and cyber intimidation.

It is good to see these changes are coming forward. I know there have been some changes made since 2016, even within the military. The government talks about the fact that the director of military prosecutions has changed the way that it does things, the way it approaches these issues. There are a number of things in the government's document. It talks about how it has already introduced changes, such as providing information proactively to victims on the choice of jurisdictions in a sexual misconduct matter. Therefore, if there is a charge of sexual misconduct, the victim now has more say in what jurisdiction he or she wants it looked at. It has some information that it can provide that will help. Victims are kept informed throughout the investigation and throughout the trial process. That did not happen before in the military. The DMP, in its overhaul of the way it has done things, has included this as one of the things it thinks is important.

●(1550)

Now the DMP has started to consider the views of victims in determining the public interest in these cases. Is there public interest in moving forward with the prosecution of the cases? It is allowing victims to participate. I know that witness preparation has been improved. It is spending more time with witnesses, finding out what they will be testifying to and if they are prepared to be competent witnesses. It is assuring victims' comfort and security. I am told it is one of the key considerations. In the past, as I mentioned, people have been intimidated, even by the way the system is set up, so this is set up to be much more fair to them.

It is making efforts to make sure that in sexual misconduct cases, victim impact statements are relevant and considered. It is trying to get consistency with the prosecution and prosecutors so that each of them approaches the issues in the same way. That is probably an important consideration in that there needs to be consistency within the military itself and the way it deals with and addresses these issues. That is part of what Bill C-77 is trying to do: to bring the consistency provided in the Victims Bill of Rights into the military part of the justice system. Another thing is that sexual misconduct cases are being expedited in the military courts to try to get them out of the way.

There are a lot of things going on. As I mentioned, there are the indigenous sentencing considerations. We heard earlier today that there are changes to the summary trial process and the way summary charges are handled. There are a number of other areas around the victims rights at courts martial as well that have changed. They have a different perspective and a different opportunity. A victim's liaison officer would be put in place to give victims an opportunity to get this information and go to somebody who can work with and help them.

I come back to the concern that Liberals are honest about dealing with victims. We have heard over the last three or four weeks in the House of Commons about a gentleman who murdered a female police officer, desecrated the body and was sentenced to jail. Then he applied for Veterans Affairs benefits and the government has been providing those benefits to him. Those benefits, I am told, can be provided by Correctional Service Canada, but the government has made the decision that he deserves veterans benefits. Conservatives have argued that he does not. There are people who have served who receive them, but he has not served or spent a moment of time in military service and yet he is getting these benefits.

The government said it would cut them off for now, but we need a better response than that from the government. That was a bad response in that case. Now with Tori Stafford, we have heard the comments made by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness this afternoon. It is another slow response, a bad response to people who have been victimized in the worst ways by crimes and the best the ministers of the government can say is they have given it to somebody who will review it for a long time and when that person gets back to them, they will let us know how it turns out. In the case of Tori Stafford, by the time that happens, how long will that woman have been in the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge, being able to do whatever she wants to do, having access to children and wandering off the property if she wants? She is not eligible for parole for another 13 years. What does she have to lose should she decide to do something inappropriate in Okimaw Ohci?

That is an example of the government not being willing to react to these issues. We hope that when this bill goes to committee, Liberals will deal seriously with it, and when it is implemented, they actually treat it seriously, because they do not have a history anywhere else of dealing fairly and honestly with victims. Hopefully, in this situation, they will and we look forward to when this bill is passed.

It is a good bill, Conservatives wrote most of it, and we are looking forward to the government applying it and hopefully, it will take care of many of these issues that people have faced at military trials and those kinds of situations.

● (1555)

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member brought up a couple of points that I fully agree with. Number one, he said it is important to have a debate on victims rights, and I concur with him on that. He also made the point that this bill really builds on a previous bill by the previous government, Bill C-71, which did not make it through debate, but takes a number of the points on victims rights and puts them into this new bill. I think about the rights to privacy and security for victims of special types of heinous crimes, such as sexual crimes. I think about the ban on publication for minors, people under 18, and I fully agree with all of that.

The member also brought up the point that this bill would add a couple of new positions, things to consider, specifically sentencing when it comes to aboriginals and gender identity. Does he see the opportunity to expand on that and if so, how would he like us to address specifically aboriginals and gender identity?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I think this has been addressed earlier today in terms of the notion of military culture. What is it that people want in their military? When people are training together they are all basically under one system, one structure, and they are expected to adhere to that command structure. Do we want various interpretations of that? Do we want everybody to be working together to the same ends?

I guess it is a discussion the committee is going to need to have about how many variations of military discipline and structure we want in the military in order for it to function properly. In this case, it is the application of the military criminal code to people who are facing sentencing. Do we want different applications of it? It is something the committee is going to have to take a look at, have a good discussion about, and I think will probably make recommendations on that issue.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about consequences of the Gladue decision. Could he tell us any challenges he sees in terms of applying that and having similar provisions provided in theatre as would be in Canada for this decision and the consequences thereof?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, this bill obviously covers a fair amount of territory and a number of areas, but in this situation, it comes back to whether we want different structures applied to different people. Do we want similar structures applied across the board within the military? What is it that the board within the military does? What is it that the government and the Canadian military need to have in order for the military to be able to operate fairly with its members directly and be effective?

We spent years on the Victims Bill of Rights talking to people across this country about what we needed to put in place in order to put a decent victims bill of rights in place, and it seems to have struck the balance it needed. Now, those provisions are being applied to this bill, and as far as I can tell, most of those things would actually apply very well to the military level as well. It is good that we are talking about getting this to committee as soon as possible. I think everybody would like to see that. It is where that discussion will take place, if there are amendments. There is opportunity for amendments at committee, as well as once it gets to the other place for debate.

● (1600)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this legislation is something individuals both inside and outside the House would recognize is fairly good, solid legislation. A good portion of it was presented a few years back when Stephen Harper was the prime minister. There are some additions to it. For example, there was a great deal more consultation with indigenous people and that has been factored in. We need to reflect on the fact that we have civilian law and we have military justice. In essence, it puts them closer together in terms of the indigenous factor. I see that as a positive thing.

It seems to me that all parties in this chamber are eager to see the bill go to committee. We all support the bill going to committee. Would the member agree that it is time we allow the bill to go to committee, so we can have that discussion he is talking about in terms of that indigenous component being incorporated into military justice, and some of the concerns the Conservatives might have with regard to that?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that our discussion has veered off victims again and back to offenders. How do we treat offenders? Do we treat different offenders differently, or whatever?

We are talking about a victims bill of rights as being applied to the military. Once again, as soon as we start talking about victims, the Liberals seem to want to talk about offenders and giving some special breaks to people of some sort so that we do not have to treat crimes seriously. It does not just happen with the bill before us but kind of a way of thinking, I think, on that side of the House. Every time we turn around, with every bill that comes through here, they have some kind of expectation that we are going to be concerned first about offenders and then we will begin to consider the situation that victims find themselves in.

Thankfully, Bill C-77 is not that. It has a different direction to it. I will point out that it would do a number of things. It would enhance access to information. I mentioned the victim liaison officer before. That is a good thing. It will be an appointment of an officer so that people will be able to get extended and enhanced access to information. There is enhanced protection for victims and not for offenders in the bill. It is for victims. There are new safety and security provisions. There are new privacy provision in the bill that would be applied. There is enhanced participation for victims and, again, not for offenders to come and say to let them off. This is supposed to be for victims, allowing them to give impact statements at sentencing. Again, the offenders would be held accountable for what they have done, and it is not about finding ways to let them off and lessen those sentences. The other thing we talked about a little earlier was enhanced restitution, the possibility of restitution that exists in the legislation, and courts martial can be required to consider making restitution for losses suffered by victims.

I want to refocus this back to the fact that the bill is about dealing with victims, giving victims a better standing, a better status and a better opportunity to have their say. It is not about offenders, how we might find other ways, and multiple ways, of letting offenders off, letting them have easier sentences and letting them not pay the price for the offences they have done.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member started off answering the last question talking about veering off, and all he did was veer off from answering the question that he was asked.

We have been talking about this a lot. This came up a few years ago, and it was talked about a lot then. Now is the time to move this on to committee so that it can be properly studied there.

The question to the member is: Is he interested in seeing this move on and can we get to that stage now?

He said earlier that he thought it was extremely important for everybody to say their piece and be contributing. I could not agree more. The only problem is that everything we keep hearing from the other side is the exact same talking points over and over. There is no new contribution to the debate.

If we have heard it all, and it has been repeated over and over, can we now send it on to committee? Will he support that?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, something else that I pointed out at the beginning of my speech is that this is the only opportunity that I have had to speak to this, and there are others in that same boat. I do not know if the member opposite is on the defence committee or not, but if he is, then he has the opportunity to speak here. He is going to have the opportunity to sit on the defence committee hearings with witnesses. That is all great, but the rest of us do not necessarily get those same opportunities.

I am thankful to be able to come here. I am sorry that he has sat here long enough that he seems to think that he is hearing the same things again and again, but I believe we have touched on some relevant things that not everyone else has spoken about this afternoon. I think that last point I made about focusing on victims instead of finding ways to let offenders off in some various ways is something that we need to come back to again and again with the government and remind it. Some people pay the price for other people's bad behaviour.

● (1605)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as someone who has been around here for over 20 years, the member understands the importance of debate and the opportunity to talk about the issues at hand. For members of the government to say that we are talking about things that they have already heard and they do not want to listen to debate any more, well, that type of arrogance is what gets democracy in trouble.

We want to make sure that every member who wants to be able to articulate themselves on a particular item, in this case Bill C-77, has that opportunity, especially when they have constituents who are interested in this very topic. It does not matter if one is interested in national defence or victims rights, one has to be able to stand in this place and share that view so that people can be informed when we have the vote. That is what informed debate is all about. Therefore, I just want to thank the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for his great articulation today on the issue and for his passion to stand up for victims rights.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, actually, this is not theoretical. We can come back to Bill C-75, the reduction of sentences bill that aims to reduce 26 various criminal offences from indictable offences to summary conviction. One is the offence of belonging to a terrorist organization, or to a gang, and a whole host of others. There are 26 different offences it is saying we need to reduce the sentences for.

He would probably say the same thing here, that we have talked about this too much and let us just get on with it, but Canadians need to hear these things and understand that the Liberal government is committed to watering down any kind of protection that victims have in our country. We need to keep saying that again and again until it soaks into the Liberals' thick skulls that they need to start figuring out some way they can step forward and protect victims, instead of always taking the side of the offender against those people who have paid the price for these people's bad and illegal behaviour.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak today to Bill C-77. As the member of Parliament for Brandon—Souris, I am very proud to say that Canadian Forces Base Shilo is part of my constituency. CFB Shilo is home to the First Regiment Royal Canadian Horse Artillery and the Second Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

The base is also home to a component of the Western Area Training Centre, 742 Signals Squadron Detachment Shilo, and 11 Canadian Forces Health Services Centre, as well as being the home station of the Royal Canadian Artillery. Other supported units include 26th Field Regiment and the Royal Canadian Army's Brandon Reserve Unit.

In Westman, the men and women of Canadian Forces Base Shilo live in various communities such as Spruce Woods, Brandon, Wawanesa, Killarney, Souris, Glenboro, to name a few of the communities around Shilo. I could put some of the ones from the riding of my colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa in there as well, in Carberry, Minnedosa, Neepawa, and other areas.

They are our friends and our neighbours. They and their families are part of our communities. Many will know that due to our quality of life and the amazing communities that are found within our constituencies, numerous members of the Canadian Armed Forces decide to make Westman their permanent home after they retire and transition into civilian life. I will not name them here, but many of them are good friends of mine and live throughout our area.

I have been interested in the affairs of the Canadian Armed Forces for all of my life and am forever grateful for the men and women who have put their lives on the line to defend Canada. The bill before us is a reiteration of our previous government's efforts to enhance the Canadian military justice system. The judicial system within the Canadian Armed Forces is distinctive due to the high standards for those in uniform. When in service, it is expected that there could be circumstances where one's life will be put in danger.

Make no mistake, the members of the Canadian Armed Forces deal with stressful and high tempo operations. They have a chain of command and there is zero room for error. Due to the high risk of injury or death, there must be a justice system put in place to maintain discipline and structure. While the Canadian Armed Forces has its own judicial system, it still operates under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The constitutionality of the military justice system has been upheld by the Supreme Court and there is jurisprudence that has upheld its separate justice system. That said, as with all government legislation, it is necessary to do a thorough review to make sure that the system is as efficient as possible.

The original National Defence Act was crafted in 1950 after World War II. While it has been modified on various occasions over the years, this legislation provides a forum for even further improvements.

I know that all members will agree with the need to ensure that the regulations and laws on the books can meet the challenges and expectations of our times. I am encouraged that the Liberal government has agreed with our previous Conservative legislation to enshrine the rights of victims into the National Defence Act.

More than ever, particularly in light of our upcoming opposition day motion this week, the rights of victims must be upheld. Far too often the justice system has forgotten to give a voice to those who have been victimized. Victims deserve to be treated with compassion and respect. They should never be an afterthought. With this legislation we will set in stone in the National Defence Act the principle that victims have rights, an extremely important point.

● (1610)

I firmly believe that every victim has the right to request information about the military justice system. Far too often, we forget that the justice system can be daunting. Some would even say it can be intimidating, especially for victims. In most cases, people have never had to navigate or deal with either the military or civilian judicial systems. While that in itself is a good thing, it is a reminder that we must be vigilant that the system is not only there to provide justice for the accused, but also for the victim.

With this legislation, we would make it crystal clear that every victim has the right to request the status and outcome of the investigation. People should not have to rely on rumours or second-hand news to find out what is happening. They should not feel they must plead for the most basic information. To bolster that point, this new victims bill of rights would give them the right to know about the location of proceedings, when these will take place and their progress and outcomes. This bill of rights would give victims the ability to request information about the offender while they are in a service prison. They could also request information when there is the release of the offender. These are simple but meaningful rights that would provide much improved transparency and support for victims.

An important change is that victims would now have the right to access services and programs. This is essential to the healing process for the victim. Being able to access ongoing counselling or mental health services should be easy for those who need them.

In this updating of the National Defence Act, I also support the new rights to protect the identity of the victim. To create the right environment for victims and witnesses to come forward, it is imperative that they have the right to request that their identity be protected. This legislation would provide the flexibility to allow victims to use pseudonyms in appropriate cases. This is a simple but very important change that could empower people to come forward while not having to feel shamed or threatened.

For victims to come forward or to feel safe while going through the process, their security must never be in doubt. That is why the protection clauses found in the bill are a step in the right direction. The legislation would direct the authorities in the military justice system to ensure that every victim has the right to reasonable and necessary measures to protect them against intimidation and retaliation. No one should have to fear speaking the truth, and no one should have to worry about the consequences of taking part in a trial or within the military justice system. This is certainly an area that I would like the defence committee to study while going through the legislation. As in many cases, military communities are small and tight-knit. While this can be a tremendous benefit, it also can create situations where the victim and the accused are in close proximity.

It would be prudent to bring forward witnesses who can speak about the expectations for these new provisions. That is one of the reasons I believe the bill should move to second reading. It would give everyone an opportunity to have a greater say.

● (1615)

It would also be wise to reach out and gather as much evidence as possible as to what other militaries or judicial systems around the world have done to protect victims. I know from my work on other committees that a valuable option to have in place is the ability to learn from other areas of the world.

Another area that must get proper study is the complaints process for victims. While the legislation would give cabinet the ability to set out the complaints process through regulation, it would be in the committee's best interests to review it. If individuals do not feel they have the appropriate avenues to lodge complaints, the overall credibility of the system could be called into question and even undermined.

This is something that our immigration committee recently reviewed for the immigration review board and I can say without hesitation that numerous concerns were brought to our attention. To expand on this point, immigration committee had unanimity with our report that we tabled in Parliament. That in itself is a perfect example of how these sorts of issues are non-partisan.

Victims of any judicial system must be at the heart of its rules and regulations. For real justice to occur, the system must be fair and orderly. It must be unbiased and it must serve those who appear before it. It must hand out appropriate sentences.

I will be voting in favour of this legislation. My Conservative colleagues on defence committee will do their due diligence in scrutinizing it and making it better.

That is why I wanted to have the opportunity to speak to this legislation today as well. Like my colleague from southwest Saskatchewan, this is the only opportunity that I will have because I am not on defence committee. That is why many of my colleagues would like to speak to this important legislation that is before us today. Many of them know people who may want to come forward as witnesses before committee. This is an opportunity for us to scrutinize this bill with great intensity, to add the areas that I talked about earlier in regards to perhaps other areas of jurisdiction not only here in Canada, but around the world so we can garner what we can for victims' rights.

I had the privilege and the opportunity of being on public safety committee when I was first elected to Parliament. Through that I learned that there are many areas that could have been improved, some of which were in the area of firearm legislation and management of the transporting and handling of firearms for law-abiding citizens. That is where I first learned the most about victims being the centre of attention instead of offenders. A few times here in the House my colleagues have said that the government of the day seems to want to deal with the rights of the offenders as opposed to the rights of the victims. I very much feel that victims need to be at the forefront of this.

That is why I have indicated that we need to make sure that victims have access to information as they go through the court process and even when decisions are made, that they be able to better understand why a decision was made the way it was.

● (1620)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for speaking so eloquently on this legislation, as so many of his other colleagues have done for 20 minutes each in the last several hours.

I would note, although I find it very interesting, that this legislation was brought before the House by the former Conservative government five days before the House rose in 2015, and essentially would lead to the dissolving of Parliament. I cannot imagine how all of those Conservative MPs who wanted to speak to this issue were going to be able to do that plus see the bill go to committee, come back to the House, go to the Senate and go through the process there in order for it to be ratified.

I am wondering if my colleague would agree that perhaps the approach that the Conservative Party is taking on this issue now is slightly disingenuous given that it brought this forward a mere five days before the House rose in 2015.

If they were genuinely concerned about this issue, then they would agree that it is time to vote in favour of the bill and let it go to committee so that the proper work can be done there. It can then come back to the House where it can be ratified and become a reality for the people that it affects.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his disconcerting tone. We are now dealing with this. I certainly did not have the opportunity to speak to it three years ago, but now we have had three years and he is concerned about the three hours that we are going to get to speak to this bill. If the government were really concerned about this on the day we have now, why did it take it three years to get it here? We have three hours to talk to it. That is why so many on our side are concerned about it.

They want to have their say, and this is again about victims' rights, not the offenders' rights. The Liberals are so concerned about offenders' rights every day they speak in this House that they forget about the victims in many cases.

This is a prime example of why I am pleased. As the member may know and may have heard me say, I am in favour of moving this forward. However, I do believe it is very important for each colleague from all sides of the House, and I notice that the Liberals think it is so important that they are not even speaking to it. I wonder about their sincerity in their efforts to bring this forward.

● (1625)

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been plenty of Liberals to speak to this. The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands and I have been asking question after question and receiving no response from the Conservatives, so I will ask the question again. The Conservatives are ragging the puck on this issue. Speaker after speaker is bringing up the same speech and same talking points. They are saying they cannot possibly appear on the committee. Any member can go to a committee. I am sure the hon. members of the defence committee would love to have all of these Conservatives go there and sit in and participate and bring forward amendments. It is their right as members of Parliament.

However, there seems to be a reason for it and it has not been answered. The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands and I have asked this numerous times: Why are they ragging the puck on this if it is the same talking points? I understand it if it is a nuanced debate and there are different speeches every time. However, if we are getting the same speech time after time, what is the point in ragging the puck on this? I would like to know.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, as I kind of alluded to just a few minutes ago, in reply to his colleague's question, if they want to talk about ragging the puck, why has it taken three years to get the bill before the House again? The government is allowing a few hours for us to be able to put our views forward on this bill. I can assure the member that CFB Shilo is in no other member's riding than my own. That is why I started off, if the member was listening to my speech today, by crediting the fine members of the Canadian Forces Base Shilo under Lieutenant-Colonel David MacIntyre there, and Lieutenant-Colonel Jay MacKeen as well.

I have had the occasion to attend many great events of the base in Shilo and deal with a whole host of areas. One of them is a favourite program of my own. I do a charity golf tournament every year. In the very first one that I ever put on, half of the proceeds went to the Military Family Resource Centre at the base at Shilo. It was dealing with the languages, with French and English, and learning more from each side, as well as the opportunities for the families to be able to use that centre better. This is purely an example of why we wanted to have the opportunity to move forward with this bill.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to laugh at the other side talking about being disingenuous. Let us go back to the throne speech of the government where it says, "And to give Canadians a stronger voice in the House of Commons, the Government will promote more open debate and free votes, and reform and strengthen committees."

The member here behind me represents CFB Shilo. There is the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, who represents Petawawa. I represent Borden. The member for Simcoe—Grey spoke, and she talked about Borden. What is it with the Liberals that they do not respect the military enough to give this debate enough time that it deserves, and to give those members those free and open debates that they rightfully deserve and that the government made clear were going to happen in the House of Commons based on its throne speech? Why is that?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for making the sincere point that he has made, that many of my colleagues on this side of the House represent Canadian Forces base areas. I thank him for pointing that out, because I know that a number of my colleagues have spoken about this bill here.

I think the government has, to a certain extent, recognized that this is following up on a bill that was brought forward by the Conservative government. However, there are still improvements that we could put into this bill. I think there will be some amendments come forward. Maybe the government will have some of its own, as it moves forward with this bill, to make sure that it is giving more rights to victims.

As I pointed out earlier, we all have to follow the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, there are military rules for justice that military members follow on their own bases across the country. I look forward to seeing this bill dealt with at committee.

● (1630)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about the Victims Bill of Rights. However, the best way to deal with victims is to prevent them from becoming victims. There are all sorts of provisions that are being put in for victims. However, in my experience, the people who are on the receiving end of the most egregious assaults are the ones who are just entering the military. They do not know what is or is not normal, what is acceptable, and how far this control in the military and the pain that is inflicted upon them actually goes. Therefore, I would like to ask my colleague this. At what point in the career of recruits should they be receiving education as to what their rights are with respect to being victimized?

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, that excellent question deserves a great deal of thought. From day one someone joining the military needs to know. At the onset of joining they could be told, "If something happens down the road, here are the things that could happen." It would be a very simple understanding and obligation of our military to be able to provide that to our young force members who are coming in.

I experienced another first-hand case myself just a few short weeks ago at CFB Shilo when I was there for the Battle of Medak sunset ceremony. It was the 25th anniversary. There were 78 retired and active military people. Some members from that battle 25 years ago are still active members. They were very much impressed by the new troops who were marching that day at the Shilo base, so much so that when they came back to do their parade on Sunday morning, those who were involved in the battle at the time paraded in front of the stand with their colonel. They then formed two rows of retired veterans and had the new troops march between them. Afterward, these new troops told me that they will never forget that. However, the people who will really never forget it are the retired ones. They were most impressed by the beginnings of these young soldiers as well.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood, the Environment; and the hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, Justice.

[*English*]

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly an honour to stand in the House today to speak about what we on all sides of the House know is an important bill, one that will seek to put victims at the centre of military law going forward.

Before I go directly into the bill, there are a few things that I want to address. Last week was a very telling week for the government and Canadians watching the government, with regard to those who have served in the military and have been victimized in different ways and through different avenues, some through PTSD and other things. We heard the Minister of Veterans Affairs refer to the underfunding of Veterans Affairs, such as for prepaid phone cards or credit cards and getting those back. If that is the attitude toward our veterans after they have served our country, the government's attitude is probably not much different toward those who are currently serving. Therefore, I can understand why it took three years to finally bring this bill, which was already written, to the House.

This bill reminds me a lot of Bill C-71. We have waited three years for anything to come to the House for other victims of society. For those who deal with accessibility or disability issues, we were promised movement in six months, and we have it now finally after three years, and even then, we are not seeing anything with any teeth.

Over the last few weeks, we have also seen government not putting victims of crime at the centre of care. An individual who was convicted of murder has been given post-traumatic stress support by psychologists and funding from Veterans Affairs, while former members of the military go into any or all members' offices requesting the same. I do not think this is a partisan issue. I would guess that MPs whose ridings are near bases, like my riding, which is about 10 kilometres from a base, have dealt with and heard some very difficult stories from those currently serving, about the services they are looking for and not having those services signed off on by Veterans Affairs, or if they are currently serving, by the Department of National Defence.

There are incredibly heart-wrenching stories that MPs and these individuals deal with. They are just not put at the centre of the process. They are not cared for in the way we would hope. I feel it is the same in the case of Mr. Christopher Garnier, seeing the way he was treated versus many veterans who fought for our country and those currently serving fighting for our freedom or others' freedom around the world.

I will go directly into the bill at this point. Despite the fact that it has taken three years, I want to congratulate the minister for bringing the bill to the House. It is said that imitation is the greatest form of flattery, so it is wonderful to see the government copy and paste from the previous Conservative government's work on Bill C-71 and continue this march forward.

This is a bill that politicians from all parties in the House want to support, as there is no greater duty of the Government of Canada, indeed, any government, than to provide for the physical safety of its citizens, especially those serving within our military. Unfortunately, in many instances, the government cannot be everywhere at all times to prevent a crime from occurring. When such a thing does happen, it is the duty of the Canadian government to ensure that justice is administered in a fair and equitable way. Conservatives have always stood up for the victims of crime and we take pride in knowing that we stand on the side of justice and to ensure that victims have an effective voice in the criminal justice system.

● (1635)

It is because of these core values that our previous Conservative government enacted the Victims Bill of Rights, and why we support enshrining victims' rights within the military justice system. It is because of these core values that our Conservative government brought forward Bill C-71 in the last Parliament.

I believe in giving credit where credit is due, so I would again like to applaud the members of the government for reintroducing Bill C-71 under its new name. I would also like to reiterate that a Conservative government will always have the backs of victims of crime. That said, it should come as no surprise to the members opposite that we will be supporting Bill C-77's getting to the committee stage.

An essential requirement of justice is that justice is blind. There can be no preference in a court of law for a person's race, religion, sex, age or anything else. All Canadian citizens must be given equal and fair treatment in any case before the judiciary. This is a principle that is completely intertwined with the concept of justice. Equality before the law is something that stretches back almost a thousand years to the signing of the Magna Carta in England. Sadly, we have not always lived up to that high principle, but the concept of equality before the law has served as an excellent guiding compass in creating an ever more just society.

The military justice system in Canada comes from a long and distinguished history, going back to the roots of the British military. Any serious military force in the world requires a robust military justice system to improve and maintain the fighting effectiveness, discipline and morale of its fighting forces. It is because of our armed forces' effectiveness, discipline and morale that Canada and our allies have been so successful in protecting our God-given freedoms from aggressive foreign enemies.

With Remembrance Day very quickly approaching, we would all do well to reflect upon the sacrifice of our valiant men and women who made Canada, and how the military justice system contributed to their ultimate success. An effective military justice system is essential for both operational efficiency and to ensure that Canadians see justice being served and completed in a fair way. It is why the previous government brought forth legislation that mirrored the Victims Bill of Rights and made sure it was put into military law as well.

The previous Conservative government understood that the highest priority for every and any government must be the safety of its own citizens, and to ensure that justice is properly administered when prevention impossible. It is why putting the rights of victims front and centre of the criminal justice system is a central tenet of our party.

Prior to the previous government, the criminal justice system leaned far too heavily toward protecting the rights of criminals. The previous Conservative government believed that balance needed to be brought back to the criminal justice system, and so we took concrete steps to hold criminals accountable for their misdeeds.

One such concrete measure was to introduce the Safe Streets and Communities Act, which introduced mandatory minimum sentences for certain sexual offences and for drug dealers. Another such example was the Victims Bill of Rights, which gave victims of crime enhanced access to information, protection, participation and restitution. Taking that and applying it to our military justice system is certainly something we will stand behind. Through this process, I am sure there are going to be ideas brought to the table on how to better this bill and strengthen it where it perhaps has failings. However, on the whole, I want to see, as I know all members of this House do, this move forward in principle.

● (1640)

In terms of the victims of crime, I said that last week was a defining week for what Canadians saw of their government, especially when it comes to victims of crime and to criminals themselves. At question period, question after question was asked about one of the killers of Tori Stafford. The killer was moved from one medium security facility to another, and in this case, she was removed from behind bars to a healing lodge. Canadians were very upset. However, no one was more upset than the father of Tori Stafford. We saw that through the media. We saw that through statements from him. We certainly saw that through Canadians who were around the family.

I found it incredibly telling when members on this side asked the Prime Minister what he was going to do to correct this injustice and support the victims rather than the person who had participated in this brutal murder. After question after question, the answer consistently seemed to be that the Prime Minister was outraged that members of the House would stand up in defence of the victims in this case and talk about the crime that was committed. The Prime Minister asked us to no longer speak about the details of the crime itself.

What really struck me was why the Prime Minister was not upset about the crime itself. Why was the Prime Minister admonishing members of the House for bringing up the factual details of how a person who had murdered an eight year old was moved to a healing lodge, instead of standing up and saying that the person who committed this crime was not serving out what Canadians would consider justice in moving to this place, and condemning the change in the facility, and moving forward hand in hand with Canadians and, more importantly, hand in hand with the victims of this crime, Tori Stafford's family?

I could not get over it. I did not understand it, especially when we consider that Bill C-77 is coming forward and we are talking consistently, as a House, about standing up for Canadians who are unable to stand up for themselves. I do not remember going to a single door where someone said that criminals needed more rights, that people who commit murders need more rights and that we need to be talking about their rights more and more. However, I do remember hearing over and over again from Canadians that we need to ensure that we protect our citizens. We need to ensure that we support victims. It does not matter where in this country they are. It does not matter the colour of their skin. It does not matter their religion or faith. It does not matter their sexual orientation. It does not matter whether they are male or female. We need to ensure that we are protecting Canadians, and one way we protect Canadians is by ensuring that those who are victims are given the supports they need.

However, that was not demonstrated in the House by the government and the Prime Minister last week. Instead, we saw the Prime Minister going in the complete opposite direction of what I believe the bill being presented by the government is trying to do. When laying the facts out and asking questions about cases in which victims have been severely hurt, we were admonished in this case for talking about what happened to this young lady. However, it was not deemed terrible that the person who did it has seen a form of freedom they do not deserve and is completely unjust. I just do not get it. I am trying to rationalize the same government bringing forward the bill before us, which sat on a shelf for three years, with a government that could not come out and say this was unjust.

● (1645)

Day after day, we need to be consistent. The message to Canadians needs to be consistent, that we will take the side of victims, that if people commit crimes, especially heinous crimes, as in the two situations I brought up today, they will pay the full penalty, the full price. Even when they are paying that penalty, that full price, it will never, ever undo the pain that has been caused to their victims.

We, as parliamentarians, need to ensure from this moment forward that when we are talking about these crimes and these victims, when there are individual cases that need to be delved into because of some injustice that has happened, that we are respectful on both sides of the House. However, the first piece of respect needs to be that it is not wrong to speak about the crime that has happened, but it is wrong to let the injustice continue.

I know, as we look forward with respect to changes to the military justice system, with respect to changes that are brought forward by the bill, that they will be done with the best of intentions, that some banter and some debate will occur at the committee level, that there will likely be amendments brought forward and that there will be testimony from those who serve in the military, from different organizations, victims' organizations, etc.

I hope, as we go through that process, we can sincerely put the victim at the centre of that process, not just a bill, not just our talking points. I hope we can move forward putting victims at the centre of the bill to ensure that what comes out committee is even better than the one that goes in and that we can win the support of everybody in the House.

I would like to end with one piece. I have a mother who is an incredible woman. I got my activism from her. For many years she lobbied, and many of the members in the House have received letters and requests, that victims, specifically of sexual crimes, be put first. I take notice of being able to stand to speak to this bill, of being able to look back, whether it was at the white ribbon campaign against child pornography, or human trafficking or many other things, which the Victims Bill of Rights was originally brought in to help with and now is being applied to the military justice system.

I take a lot of pride in knowing that one Canadian, and I am sure there was at least one in every riding, stood up and put pressure on the government of the day to bring something forward. I take a lot of pride in standing up as a Conservative, knowing that it was our government that brought forward the Victims Bill of Rights. I take pride in knowing that we brought forward this bill, before the end of our mandate. I take pride in knowing that I will be able to be part of this hopeful solution at the end.

● (1650)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during his remarks, the member made a comment, which many members on the other side of the House have been making, about why it had taken so long to get this legislation to the House.

I would argue that it is exactly because of the reason why we seem to be stalled on it right now. Time and again the Conservatives put up road blocks to moving forward with legislation. We all know that we all agree on this. We are all going to, pretty much unanimously, vote in favour of this.

Why are we not sending it to committee so it can be properly studied, so the people who could be impacted by it will genuinely have an opportunity when it becomes legislation? I have already asked that, and I do not expect to get a clear answer. I will ask the member something else.

The member also mentioned vets. He talked about the record of Liberals versus Conservatives when it came to vets. Interestingly enough, the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry posted something on his Facebook page last week. He asked which party defended the rights of veterans. Then he put a Conservative logo and a Liberal logo. He had a whopping 1,400 votes on that. The Conservative member's own poll yielded 26% for the Conservatives and 74% for the Liberals.

Would the member agree that the poll is correct, or would he suggest that the constituents from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry do not have their facts straight?

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the first part of the member's question, if it was a question. I believe he was asking how parliamentarians on this side of the House, and I have heard him speak at other times on this, could stand, represent our constituents, represent our armed forces, represent victims of crime, represent veterans and do our job to ensure the voices of Canadians were heard in the people's House. Are you kidding me? This is day two. You waited three years and this is day two. That type of politics has no place in the House, especially when we are dealing with such an important subject as victims of crime being added into the military justice system.

● (1655)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would encourage you to encourage the member to refer to me through you. As he was saying "you", I do not think that is proper parliamentary practice.

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the intervention of the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands. Indeed, he is correct that we do encourage all hon. members to direct their comments to the Chair and use the third person. It does avoid the inflection of personal remarks to individual members as opposed to the neutral chair occupant as is the case.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Mr. Speaker, I knew you were not kidding me.

The Deputy Speaker: I do not know that this gets to the heart of the matter, but we will go ahead with questions and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to what the member had to say. We have very progressive legislation that should be passed. The member talked a lot about victims' rights. The very essence of the legislation would enshrine victims' rights. We all support that. My colleague asked about how many hours of debate. It is a legitimate question, given the finite amount of time we get to debate legislation. Everyone is supporting the legislation. I can appreciate the member's opinion in his response.

Would the member, at the very least, acknowledge that there is wide support for this legislation? No one party is the protector of victims' rights. He cited the member who said that it was Stephen Harper who reduced it from a heavy penitentiary to a middle penitentiary.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Mr. Speaker, I actually do not believe I said that, but maybe the record will correct me later on.

With respect to widespread support, I did say that. I believe there is widespread support for enshrining the Victims Bill of Rights in the military justice system, so I would agree. That was already stated in my speech. I am not sure what I should be answering at this point.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it almost offensive that the government is saying that we are putting roadblocks in the way of democracy, in the way of discussion, in front of something where we want to have the debate, where we do agree on the Victims Bill of Rights for the military.

It will be interesting to see, when the bill gets to committee, how many amendments may come forward and will get addressed to improve it. One of the concerns is that we on this side want to ensure this debate is fulsome. We want to ensure that the relevant points are brought out. Therefore, it may be the only time that those of us on this side of the House get an opportunity to have input on the bill or the amendments. Is there a concern that this is a roadblock or are we just talking about democracy and its full right here?

● (1700)

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Mr. Speaker, I am standing beside the member for Barrie—Innisfil right now. We had the honour of serving together on Barrie city council. One of the things that always happened was that for every agenda, we would only speak to items on which we disagreed. The net effect of that approach is that the only thing we ever hear from politicians is the opposite approach or the arguments.

There are a lot of things here that we do agree on, on all sides of the House. It is important that we voice what those items are. It is also important, as we move into the committee stage, that a lot of material that comes out of these speeches can be taken to committee, addressed and amendments put forward. After the amendments are put forward, hopefully, the bill is approved and made even better than it is.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I have the words correct here. It was Stephen Harper who actually moved the individual in question, whom the member spent a portion of his speech on, from a maximum security facility to a medium security facility. Why did the Conservatives have no opposition to that? Now that they are in opposition, they are completely outraged. They had no problem back then going from maximum to medium. Perhaps he could he comment on that.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Mr. Speaker, just to correct the record before I answer the question, what he stated earlier that I took exception to was that I had stated that myself. I did not state that whatsoever.

With respect to the point he is making now, we could go in and say that there is a piece of paper that says these things are the same. The reality is that what we are seeing on the ground is someone go from behind bars and fences to a facility that does not have those, plus it has children in it. Those were the concerns brought forward. They are being brought forward by Canadians. They are being brought forward by the family of the person.

This exactly exemplifies the concerns I had with the attitude that was shown last week, these details in terms of who, what, where, why, when, did what to whom. Concerns were brought forward by the father of the little girl who was murdered and the answer from the government was that it was someone else's problem. The answer needs to be that the government is going to fix the problem and make it better for that family and, quite frankly, for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I would like to inform the House that we have concluded the five hours provided for the first round of debate on this motion. Consequently, the speeches will now be 10 minutes and the period for questions and comments will be 5 minutes.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I get into the issue at hand, it is no wonder that taxpayers and voters across this country get skeptical about politics when somebody, whether it is the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister or the Minister of Veterans Affairs, stands up every day and tries to pretend that something is exactly like something else when it is not. I am referring to what he just talked about on the minimum-security prison where this murderer, child killer, was moved to. She was behind bars in minimum security. She is not today and that is a huge difference. People get it, no matter how they try and spin it.

Before my blood boils much more, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-77, which will amend the National Defence Act to bring about some changes to the Canadian military justice system. For the most part, these changes are both needed and welcomed. The bill before us today is in fact very similar to a previous Conservative bill, Bill C-71. I do not want to confuse anyone. The Bill C-71 that I am referring to is a bill from a previous government. It is not the same Bill C-71 that the Liberals have passed through this House which is a direct attack on law-abiding firearms owners. That is most certainly a Bill C-71 that I will never be supporting. The Bill C-71 that I am referring to was put forward by our previous Conservative government in an attempt to accomplish many of the same goals that the bill before us here today seeks to accomplish.

The fundamental objectives of this legislation, that I believe are supported across party lines, are aligning the military justice system in Canada with the Criminal Code of Canada, enshrining the Victims Bill of Rights into the National Defence Act, putting a statute of limitations of six months on summary trial cases and clarifying what cases should be handled by a summary trial. These are all very positive steps forward that are contained within Bill C-77 and I am supportive of them moving forward.

I would like to take some time to focus on one of these central points, with respect to enacting the Victims Bill of Rights. It should be pointed out that it was the former Conservative government that brought forward the Victims Bill of Rights when we were in government. It was an incredible step forward to ensure that Canadians who are victims of crime are supported. That is our party's record when it comes to supporting survivors.

Unfortunately, time and time again we see the Liberals talking the talk but not walking the walk when it comes to support for victims in this country. In fact, they've adopted a "hug a thug" mentality when it comes to modernizing the Criminal Code. Through Bill C-75, the Liberals are actually making it possible for perpetrators of heinous criminal acts, some carrying sentences of 10 years in prison, to get off with only a ticket, fine or minor jail time. Bill C-75 introduces a number of measures that are intended to deal with delays in Canada's court system. However, as I have said, the massive 302-page bill will also end up reducing sentences for a number of dangerous crimes. This will be done by provisions in the bill that could reclassify indictable offences so that they may be punishable as summary offences, which would carry a maximum penalty of only two years.

A potential 10-year sentence lessened to two years is the Liberal solution to judicial delays. I sent a mailing out to my constituents that informed them of Bill C-75 and what it would do. I invited them to respond to me via a response card. The response card asked them if they agreed with Bill C-75. To be clear, there was literature that went with it to explain exactly what was there so that people understood what they were voting on.

In my entire time serving the riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, I have never had such an immense return to a mailing like this. I received nearly 1,600 responses to this question. Of the responses, 97% of respondents said that they disagreed with Bill C-75, while only 31 individuals out of that 1,600 agreed and 17 were unsure or needed more information. This was certainly a message heard loud and clear. Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound does not support Bill C-75.

Canadians are also having a hard time believing that this government supports the men and women who serve this country.

● (1705)

I rose in the House last week to make the Minister of Veterans Affairs aware of a veteran in Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound who cannot receive the important support he needs. He is 87 years old and is a veteran of the Korean War. His name is Barry Jackson. I know the family well. He served our country admirably and is now looking for any kind of help from Veterans Affairs. Unfortunately, it will not return his calls.

First I will provide a bit of history. It took years for Barry Jackson to be approved for a wheelchair ramp. Now he needs a scooter, and all he gets is silence from Veterans Affairs. His son Jonathan contacted my office after learning that the Liberals were paying for PTSD treatment for a convicted murderer who has never served in the military one single day in his life. It truly is shameful that a murderer and cop killer with not one day of military service is receiving benefits.

When Barry Jackson got the call from Canada in 1951, he answered that call and headed off to Korea, just like thousands of other young Canadian men did. However, years later, when Barry Jackson needed help and reached out to Canada, nada, nothing, zero. From Veterans Affairs, nothing; from the Prime Minister, nothing; from the Minister of Veterans Affairs, nothing. They should all be ashamed.

Christopher Garnier, meanwhile, committed unspeakable acts, but because his father served in the armed forces, he is getting support, while actual veterans like Barry Jackson wait and wait. It is unfair and, I would say, un-Canadian. What is really ironic, and we can use whatever word we want, is that with the money in Veterans Affairs and the services available, veterans like Barry Jackson, who laid their lives on the line to earn those services when they needed them, are the ones who cannot get them. However, a cop killer and rapist like Chris Garnier, one of the worst human beings one can imagine, has no problem getting them and did not serve one day. That is why people shake their heads and wonder why they even support or want government. It is things like this that give it all a dirty feeling.

When it comes to supporting victims and the men and women who serve this country, the Liberals do not have a great record.

Earlier in my remarks, I mentioned that Bill C-77 almost directly mirrors Bill C-71 from a previous Parliament. There are, however, a few differences I would like to highlight. Perhaps the most glaring difference between the two bills would be the addition of the Gladue decision in relation to subsection 718.2(e) of the Criminal Code of Canada to the National Defence Act.

This addition would mean that aboriginal members of the Canadian Armed Forces facing charges under the National Defence Act may face lighter punishment if convicted. There is absolutely no place in the Canadian Armed Forces, or in Canadian society, for that matter, for discrimination of any kind. No one should ever be discriminated against based upon race, gender, religion, culture or any other factor. That being said, the insertion of this principle has the potential to result in different considerations for offences committed by aboriginal CAF members than for those committed by non-aboriginal forces members. This could lead to sentences that are less harsh and could undermine operational discipline, morale in the forces and even anti-racism policies.

I want to point out, while I have the opportunity, that there are two reserves in my riding. Cape Croker, which is just north of my home town of Wiarton, has the distinction of having the highest percentage of young men who have served in wars. That is something I know they are proud of. Wilmer Nadjiwon, a former chief, just passed away a year or so ago at 96. I stand to be corrected, but I believe that he and seven of his brothers, the eight of them, were in the war, and some of them did not come home. They gave it all, so this is not a slam against aboriginal veterans across this country.

● (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that Bill C-77 has cross-party support. The individuals who are following the debate appreciate and value what is being done here.

The Minister of National Defence has taken a long-term approach with the whole file, and we hear a lot about Canada's policy of "Strong, Secure, Engaged". We talk about financial commitments, investing in our regular forces, our reserves and our veterans. We now have before us a strong piece of proposed legislation that complements and brings the military justice system in tune with the civilian justice system. It is all part of a package.

I wonder if my colleague across the way would acknowledge how important it is that, when we deal with issues of this nature, it is very much holistic. We owe it to our women and men who serve us, our vets and Canadians as a whole to bring in good, solid legislation. It would appear that all members of this House are behind it.

● (1715)

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, in general terms, I absolutely believe and support that veterans and people who have served and are serving deserve the best legislation that we can collectively put forward.

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the First World War, it makes me think of my Uncle Harold and Elvin Miller who both served. My Uncle Elvin got as far as Halifax when the war ended. Thankfully, he did not have to go, but my Uncle Harold did. On my mom's side, I have my great Uncle Bertram Isaac Pyke who is buried in Groesbeek cemetery. I have a distinct love and respect, as I think most people do, for our veterans.

Of course, we should get the proposed legislation passed. It is not perfect, but I look forward to supporting it and getting it to committee.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague spoke about the aboriginal family in his riding that committed eight members of their family to the war effort. Like the hon. member, I am an hon. member of the Grey and Simcoe Foresters, as you are, Mr. Speaker. There is the tradition and history within Simcoe County with the work they have done, not just at the base but in serving up north.

I would ask my colleague what that means to him and what it means to his community in terms of that military service and sacrifice so many have paid the price for.

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, the member is right, and we are both very fortunate. Our ridings have a great number of the Grey and Simcoe Foresters in them. In fact, a good friend of mine who the member knows, Colonel Shane McArthur, took over again the command of the Grey and Simcoe Foresters. He just got back from his seventh or eighth tour of Afghanistan and Iraq. He just got home from Iraq. These are the kinds of people the member and I represent in our ridings, and I think a lot of people do.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Shane back. I am glad he is safe and I will see him soon.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for the great work that he has done over the last fourteen and a half years in the House on behalf of his constituents.

I have had the pleasure to tour the CFB Borden with the member and saw the great work that our forces are doing in getting new recruits trained up and our new officers in a position of leadership. I can tell members that he is passionate about supporting our troops and military. He wants to make sure that we have all the resources there for them and support for victims rights within the Canadian Armed Forces and, more importantly, that our troops are equipped and well trained to do the job as they are called upon.

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for coming to my riding a few months ago in June. We went out and toured the training centre at Meaford and met with Lieutenant-Colonel L'Heureux and a number of others. It means a lot to them that I am there as their member of Parliament to support them, but when I bring my colleagues, like the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, I think it shows that all of us collectively care about what they do and we want to know what we can do better. We should keep that kind of thing up.

● (1720)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for the upper Ottawa Valley riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, home to Garrison Petawawa, training ground of the warriors, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill C-77, the legislation that, if passed, would amend provisions of the National Defence Act governing the military justice system. As a member of the Standing Committee on National Defence, I look forward to examining Bill C-77 in greater detail, and I will vote with my party to send this legislation to committee for further study.

It has been noted by our party's defence critic that Bill C-77 incorporates many of the legislative proposals made by the Conservative government in the 41st Parliament. This fact alone loan merits my support of the bill at second reading. There are changes between the legislation introduced by the Conservative government in the last Parliament and what we have before us today, and those changes will need to be carefully scrutinized.

As the member of Parliament for the riding that is home to Garrison Petawawa, Canada's largest army base, military justice is still a volatile topic. In addition to being the home of 2 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group, 2 CMBG, and the 4th Canadian Division Support Group, which is made up of 2 RCHA, 1 RCR and 3 RCR, RCDs and 2 Combat Engineer Regiment, as well as 427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron and 450 Tactical Helicopter Squadron, Garrison Petawawa is also home to CSOR, the Canadian Special Operations Regiment.

CSOR, which was stood up during the Conservative watch of the defence of our nation, is the first new regiment to be stood up in over 50 years. I am proud of the role I played in supporting that decision and the subsequent decision to locate 450 Air Tactical Helicopter Squadron to be close by, to train with the troops its Chinook helicopters serve as strategic lift for. It made absolute sense to locate CSOR at Garrison Petawawa.

Petawawa is the home of the storied Canadian Airborne Regiment before it was disbanded during the decade of darkness that occurred prior to the election of a Conservative government. I mention that dark time in Canadian military history, the disbanding of the Canadian Airborne Regiment, as there is a direct relationship between that sad event and the legislation we have before us today.

March 5, 1995 will be forever etched in the minds of many Canadian veterans and their supporters as a day of infamy. That is the date the Canadian Airborne Regiment was officially disbanded by David Collenette, the the minister of defence at the time in the Jean Chrétien government. Collenette acted against the advice of the Chief of the Defence Staff in ordering the regiment to be disbanded. The most unfortunate aspect of the few acts of a handful of Canadian soldiers is that the Canadian success story in Somalia has been overlooked by the media and remains largely unknown to the majority of Canadians.

In late 1992, the Canadian Airborne Regiment was sent to Somalia to assist the United Nations peacekeeping mission in that country. Initially, the UN troops operated according to the relatively restrictive rules of engagement that directed most such operations. As the violence in Somalia escalated, however, the United States requested and received permission to modify its role. The Canadian Airborne Regiment received a change in orders. Canadian soldiers were ordered to be peace makers instead of being peacekeepers, two very different roles. The untold story is how the paratroopers of the Canadian Airborne Regiment, tankers of the Royal Canadian Dragoons and combat engineers of 1 Combat Engineer Regiment, all based in Garrison Petawawa, very quickly subdued heavily armed gangs. Attacks on Canadian patrols early in the mission were suppressed with force and local warlords quickly realized that Canada's combat power was not just for show. Humanitarian agencies could then go about their business of distributing relief supplies, a task that was never the primary mission of Canada's troops.

Canada's soldiers then turned to rebuilding a local infrastructure of the police, hospitals, schools, etc. Poignant testimony of the effectiveness of the second reconstruction phase of the Canadian mission came from the father of the dead Somali at the centre of the controversy. He pleaded with Major-General Lewis Mackenzie, who was by then retired and on assignment as a journalist to Somalia, to intercede to keep the Canadian soldiers in his country. He told Mackenzie that, while he grieved for his son, the value of the peace makers to Somalia was enormous.

● (1725)

If Canadians are going to use this dark period in military history as a learning exercise, there are several things parliamentarians need to keep in mind when we study this legislation in detail.

A big difference between this legislation and the bill that was introduced by the previous Conservative government is special consideration for indigenous members that results in sentences that are less harsh versus other Canadian Armed Forces members. There is a legitimate concern that a two-tier system of military justice could undermine operational discipline, morale and anti-racism policies.

The following question needs be considered: If the legislative provisions in Bill C-77 had been in place during the Somalia affair, and had he been fit to stand trial, should Master Corporal Clayton Matchee, an aboriginal, been treated any differently, under the circumstances, than a non-aboriginal soldier? Would the Liberal government of the day have been so quick to disband the Canadian Airborne Regiment and slash military spending in that circumstance?

The symbol for justice is a blindfolded figure holding a set of scales in balance. Will serving soldiers see a set of scales in balance or weighted in favour of someone based on government policies that tip the scale based on the political flavour of the day? Members of the Canadian Armed Forces should not be discriminated against based on race, gender, creed or culture.

I recognize that the Chief of Defence Staff stood up to deal with sexual misconduct and other forms of discrimination in the armed forces. However, as parliamentarians, we need to tread very carefully each time changes are made that would affect our women and men in uniform.

Consider this. For members of the Canadian Armed Forces, when they put on the uniform, they are soldiers first. That is an important distinction. In an operational setting, they need to rely on their fellow soldiers. Would Bill C-77 contribute to or diminish camaraderie among soldiers? Would Bill C-77 hurt operational efficiency? We need to keep asking these questions with real-life experiences in mind. Psychological experiments in troop cohesion will end up getting soldiers killed, the same way political expediency led to the loss of soldiers' lives in Afghanistan with the cancellation of the EH-101 helicopter contract by the Chrétien Liberal government.

One of the other take-aways from the Somalia affair was the report on the military justice system completed by former chief justice Brian Dickson in 1977. While it recognized that there was a breakdown in the chain of command, it also recognized that the chain of command, the flow of responsibility, must be at the heart of the military justice system. In the same way, a cabinet minister is expected to take responsibility for bad decisions by resigning, or, where there is a lack of judgment in not resigning, is fired by the Prime Minister.

The Somalia affair resulted in the end of a number of political careers, including several Liberal defence ministers. What is truly unfortunate about the Somalia affair is that with the political decision by the Liberal government of the day to shut down the civilian inquiry, the true cause of the breakdown in the chain of command never came to light. I quote from a 2017 media story:

> The man who led an inquiry into the 1992 beating death of a Somali teenager at the hands of Canadian troops says he is frustrated that his commission's work was cut short before it could explore what role a controversial anti-malarial drug might have played in the violence.
>
> Gilles Létourneau, a retired judge of the Federal Court of Appeal, says it may be too difficult now to examine whether mefloquine was a major factor in the so-called Somalia Affair because most of the soldiers who were deployed to the African country have left the military. But Mr. Létourneau told The Globe and Mail in a telephone interview on Wednesday it would be worthwhile to take a hard public look at the dangers posed by the drug, which is still being offered to Canadian Force members.
>
> "Surely, run a survey of existing use of mefloquine within the Armed Forces and see whether the problems that were raised 20 years ago are still there," Mr. Létourneau said.
>
> "We ran out of time," he said of the inquiry, which gathered evidence for two years before being cut off by the Liberal government of Jean Chrétien before the 1997 election. "There were so many issues to be covered, and this was one we had to leave aside in the hope that eventually medical progress would either sort out or solve these problems. But it hasn't been followed up, from what I can gather."

● (1730)

Health Canada agreed in August, three years after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration came to the same conclusion, with an assessment that said mefloquine can cause permanent brain damage.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I know the hon. member still has some things she would like to say, and hopefully she will be able to do that during questions and comments.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, as it is my first opportunity to speak to this bill, I wanted to use the moment to say that I support it.

These changes that are being made to ensure that we close the gaps that exist in the rights of victims of crimes within our Canadian military justice system have been a long time coming. The only substantial difference, as my hon. colleague just mentioned, between this and the efforts that were being brought forward under the previous minister in the 41st Parliament, is the extension to considerations for those who are within the military justice system and who are indigenous. I think these are very appropriate, given the statistics we have seen of disproportionality in incarceration for indigenous peoples, both within the criminal justice system in general and within our military justice system.

I just wanted to use the opportunity for a comment. My only question for the hon. member is, would the Conservatives consider letting the debate collapse soon so that the bill could get to committee even sooner?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, I do not know what my colleague at the end of the House is talking about or why she would want to rush it. We have to examine this bill here so that we can hear what our other colleagues are concerned about. Even just looking at the bill itself, it says:

> Every victim has the right, on request, to information about...the offender while they are in a service prison or detention barrack...

Are they not getting that information now?

In "Protection from intimidation and retaliation", it says:

> ...in the military justice system to protect the victims from intimidation and retaliation.

Do these protections not already exist for the protection of the victim?

On detention in a barrack, it is my experience that it is not the perpetrator who is detained in a barrack or a prison. Right now, it is the victim who is separated from her unit.

On "Privacy" it says:

> Every victim has the right to have their privacy considered by the appropriate authorities...

However, nothing is going to be guaranteed.

This is the type of thing that we want to raise now, because in committee, quite frankly, there is the tyranny of the majority, and things just get rammed through.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague did bring up an interesting aspect of this that I, quite frankly, did not think about, and that was the issue of mefloquine and how that could have potentially impacted the issue in Somalia.

The hon. member may know that at veterans affairs committee, as we studied mental health issues among veterans, the issue of mefloquine came up. In fact, just a couple of weeks ago, I believe it was on September 19, there was a rally of mefloquine survivors out here on Parliament Hill. Along with several of my colleagues and NDP colleagues, I went out there, but not one Liberal member went out there to meet the mefloquine survivors.

They are not asking for much. They are asking for the government to investigate this, for outreach, to find out the impact that mefloquine has had on the lives of those veterans who were administered this while serving in Somalia and other theatres of war.

I believe my hon. colleague was out there. I would like to hear her comments on the issue of mefloquine.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, I will continue on with the quote from before I was interrupted:

> Symptoms reported by some users include anxiety, paranoia, depression, hallucinations, psychotic behaviour and, in rare cases, thoughts of suicide.
>
> Some Canadian veterans say the drug ruined their lives. They are asking the government to contact members of the Armed Forces or veterans who were required to take it in places like Somalia, Rwanda and Afghanistan to determine if they suffered long-term consequences. They want more research to develop better diagnosis and treatment of the effects. And they are calling for an inquiry to determine what role mefloquine might have played in Somalia.
>
> "No doubt about it, it should have been explored" during the Somalia Inquiry, Mr. Létourneau said, "because many soldiers complained to us when we toured ... about the mefloquine and the side-effects and the nightmares. They called them the mefloquines. There were a high number of persons reporting to us that it affected their behaviour and it scared them."
>
> Jonathan Vance, the Chief of Defence Staff, said this week that the mefloquine issue has his full attention in light of the Health Canada warning. He has assigned Brigadier-General Hugh MacKay, the Surgeon-General of the Canadian Armed Forces, to examine the its current use.

That, indeed, did play a role in a case that has led to future military justice legislation.

● (1735)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to speak to Bill C-77, an act to amend the National Defence Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts.

While we know that Canada's military justice system operates separately from Canada's civilian justice system, it is nevertheless important that its system is also just and fair. Canadian Armed Forces members are held to a high standard of conduct. It is understood that Canada's separate military justice system exists to maintain discipline, efficiency and morale in the Canadian Armed Forces. The safety and well-being of all Canadians is dependent on the military's ability to deal with internal discipline effectively and efficiently. That is because our esteemed men and women serving in the military are often required to risk injury or death when they perform their duties. Nonetheless, when it comes to provisions to support victims, there is a gap in the National Defence Act. Victims' rights should be at the heart of every criminal justice system. The proposed legislation takes a step toward that goal. It extends victims' rights into the military justice system, which is certainly positive.

The legislation we are considering is in fact largely modelled after Bill C-71, which was introduced in the previous parliament by the former Conservative government. It builds on existing efforts to put victims of crime at the heart of Canada's criminal justice system. The Conservatives have a proud record of standing up for victims of crime and law-abiding citizens, and we remain committed to them. We have and will always work toward ensuring that victims of crime have an effective voice in the criminal justice system, and we will never accept having the rights of criminals ahead of those of victims of crime and law-abiding citizens. In fact, for far too many years in Canada the scales of justice tipped in favour of criminals. Our criminal justice system neglected those who had been affected by their crimes. It neglected the rights of victims of crime. I am proud of the hard work and the achievements of our former Conservative government. Our country is better off for it. It took significant steps to find a better balance in our criminal justice system, steps that gave victims of crime clear, enforceable rights and protections.

The principle that victims of crimes should be a priority in Canada's criminal justice system was reflected throughout the former Conservative government's policies, reforms, and even investments. Whether it was the creation of the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, the passing of the Safe Streets and Communities Act, or investments in child advocacy centres across the country, victims and law-abiding criminals were always the priority.

The landmark Canadian Victims Bill of Rights was the most notable forward step for victims taken by the former Conservative government. This historic legislation entrenched the rights of victims of crime into a single document at the federal level. The Canadian Victims Bill of Rights guarantees victims of crime the right to information, protection, participation and restitution. It means that the rights of victims are considered at every stage of the criminal justice process, as they should be.

After entrenching the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights in Canada's criminal justice system, our former Conservative government tabled legislation to also give victims of service offences the same rights, that is, the right to information, protection, participation and restitution. Unfortunately, there was not enough time to study and pass this legislation before the dissolution of Parliament. However, I am pleased that the current Liberal government, through Bill C-77, has copied that legislation. It is the right thing to do. As we work to protect and promote victims' rights, we are helping to ensure that both of Canada's criminal justice systems help those who truly deserve support.

● (1140)

Given that the legislation for the most part is a carbon copy of the legislation introduced by the former Conservative government, it is disappointing that it is being introduced so late in the Liberal government's mandate. I suppose this is perhaps a reflection of the Liberal government's record on victims' rights.

Unfortunately, it is way too easy to offer examples of the Liberal government's appalling record of putting the rights of dangerous criminals ahead of the rights of victims and their families. Just last week, the Liberals voted against our Conservative motion calling on their Minister of Veterans Affairs to revoke the Veterans Affairs-funded benefits of Chris Garnier, a convicted cop killer. Moreover, the Liberal government is still defending the transfer of Terri-Lynne McClintic to a healing lodge. McClintic was convicted of first-degree murder in the 2009 kidnapping and rape of eight-year-old Tori Stafford. Less than 10 years after the disgusting crimes she committed, she has no business being transferred to a healing lodge facility. That facility has no fences around it and often has children present. However, the Liberal public safety minister has defended this decision and downgraded her despicable crimes to "bad practices". As a mother of two young children, I am livid by the Liberal government's refusal to exercise its moral, legal and political authority to reverse this decision, and my heart breaks for the family of Tori Stafford.

These are just two recent examples in the public eye of the Liberals' backward priorities. They have also tabled Bill C-75, which makes sweeping changes to Canada's Criminal Code. It undoes a lot of the progress our former government made to put the rights of victims ahead of criminals.

While we are considering the legislation before us, I would point out that the Liberals are also pushing through legislation to reduce sentencing for serious crimes. These are serious crimes like human trafficking, participation in a terrorist group or the abduction of a child under the age of 14. The Liberal record of putting the rights of criminals ahead of victims is shameful. It is not a record of restoring victim rights.

That said, I am pleased to see that a version of our Conservative legislation has been brought forward by this government. Victims' rights should never fall by the wayside in either of Canada's systems of justice. That is why passing this legislation is so important. Like the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, this legislation entrenches four key rights for victims of service offences. First, it provides the right to information. This includes the right to information on the military justice system, as well as services and programs available to victims. It also gives victims the right to information about the progress of the case. The legislation gives victims the right to protection by giving consideration to their privacy and security through the military justice process. It gives them the right to participate in the proceedings and creates an opportunity for a victim impact statement to be made. It also gives the right to restitution when financial losses can reasonably be determined.

The addition of these rights to the military justice system through the Code of Service Discipline's declaration of victims' rights places these rights at the heart of the military justice system. That is exactly where they belong. The legislation has my support. I will be voting in favour of sending it to committee so it can be studied in detail.

Conservatives will always stand in support of victims. We will always be in favour of giving victims a stronger voice in Canada's criminal justice systems. I hope the legislation is referred to committee and that all victims of crime and law-abiding Canadians are given a greater priority by the Liberal government.

● (1745)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad to hear the member suggesting that we advance the legislation to committee. We have also had the Green Party and New Democrats advocate that. The government and many members of her own caucus would like to see that happen. I wonder if I could suggest that we try to pass it today as a way of responding positively to those following the debate.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Why are they holding it up?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the government House leader that if she wishes to ask a question, she can stand to ask the question as long as she is in her space. In the meantime, I would ask that she afford the respect to the members who are going to be speaking.

The hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, a member was heckling me about getting my talking points. I do not have talking points on this. There are people in this party and on this side of the House who want to speak to this. It is unfortunate that the Liberal government is wanting to force this through. I am surprised we do not have a time allocation on it or something like that. That seems to be normal over there.

As my previous colleague has said, she will not be surprised if and when this goes to committee, it will be rammed through to please whatever the Liberal agenda is.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are talking about this eventually getting to committee and we really hope it does eventfully happen. I recognize that so many Conservatives are interested in talking to this very important topic, but it begs this question. When they originally introduced very similar legislation, why did they introduce it five days before the House rose in 2015, only to know that Parliament would be dissolved shortly thereafter and that the legislation would never end up making it anywhere?

Would my colleague agree that it perhaps is slightly disingenuous, given the fact that the process to go through the House and the Senate would take much longer than five days, yet there was such great passion for this issue, as we can see coming from the Conservatives?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, what is disingenuous is the government of the day, the Liberal government, putting victims rights first. We are not seeing that.

I listed two recent incidents in the past week where the Liberals had the opportunity to do the right thing, the moral thing and set an example, not just Canadians but young Canadians, that if something was wrong, they would take the high road and they would do what was appropriate and fix the mistake.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the interesting parts of the bill are the new rights in it, which in fact were previously in the Conservative bill. What the Liberals have done is simply cut and paste this bill. It was for victims who might not otherwise feel safe. Now that victims can request that their identities be protected, how important is that change in encouraging more victims to come forward while protecting their safety?

Does my hon. colleague agree with that aspect of the bill?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, what is important is that any time there is a victim of any type of crime, no matter what the scale of the crime, we put the victim's decency, dignity and respect above all things. In my past line of work as a social worker, far too many times we saw victims who were re-victimized over and over again because of failures with the system.

An hon. member: Tori Stafford's father.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Yes, exactly, just with what is happening with Tori Stafford. Her family is being re-victimized again and it is unfortunate that the government is not standing up and doing the right moral thing.

● (1750)

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to debate Bill C-77, an act to amend the National Defence Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts.

I find the comments coming from the Liberals somewhat interesting and rich about needing to ram this bill through all of a sudden. Here we are on October 1, and now it is time to ram this bill through when it took them three years to get to this point. When it was first introduced on May 10, we went through two months of sitting in May and June, had midnight sittings through most of the month of June, but yet the government did not see fit to bring it forward for debate then. Instead, the first day of debate for this bill was September 21, a Friday sitting, where just about two hours of debate can occur. Here we are on just our second day on the bill, and all of a sudden the Liberals are crying that we should be immediately ramming this through, before members have a chance to debate it.

In our former Conservative government, we placed victims at the centre of our criminal justice system. We thought it was important the victim of a crime be granted the right and privilege to participate in the criminal justice system. We did this in a number of different ways, but most importantly, through Bill C-32, which created the Victims Bill of Rights. We did that because we felt it was important the victim have a voice and the opportunity to fully participate in our criminal justice system.

It has been disappointing to hear from these Liberals the last couple of weeks, who would rather place criminals ahead of victims on so many different issues. In the past two weeks alone, we saw these Liberals defend granting veterans benefits to convicted murderer Chris Garnier, a convicted murderer who did not spend a single day in the military. He never once donned our nation's uniform, never once participated in Canada's Armed Forces, yet these Liberals stood in this very place and defended the right of that convicted murderer to receive veterans benefits for post-traumatic stress disorder, that he, by his own admission, had because of the brutal murder he committed. These Liberals are defending his right to receive treatment paid for by veterans rather than that which is available through our Correctional Service of Canada.

Tomorrow we will be debating a motion in this very place brought forward by our leader, the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, about the tragic case of Tori Stafford's murderer being transferred from a prison with bars and razor wire to a healing lodge, where the commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada admitted there are often children present. We heard the Liberals defending this once again today in question period, defending the murderer of an eight-year-old girl who was brutally murdered. The Liberals are defending the transfer of her killer from a prison to a healing lodge. It is wrong. Tomorrow, we will see where the Liberals truly stand on victims when they are called to account to stand in this place and defend that decision.

This follows a series of moves by these Liberals to place a greater emphasis on the criminal rather than the victim. Bill C-75 would actually reduce a sentence for a number of what we on this side consider serious crimes.

● (1755)

This would include participating in the activity of a terrorist group, infanticide, a couple of impaired driving offences causing bodily harm, abducting a person under the age of 14, forced marriage, advocating genocide, extortion by libel, arson for fraudulent purposes, and possession of property obtained by crime. They also want sentences reduced for participation in the activities of a criminal organization. With all of the challenges we are facing, these Liberals want to reduce sentence for those participating in gang activities. I know this is wrong and Canadians know it is wrong.

When the former Conservative government introduced the Victims Bill of Rights in 2014, our then justice minister saw fit to make this bill of rights a quasi-constitutional document, a document so important that it would take precedence over many other federal statutes. At the time, our minister of justice, the hon. Peter Mackay, stated on April 9, 2014:

> In order to give meaningful effect to victims' rights by all players in our criminal justice system, our government is proposing that this bill have quasi-constitutional status. This would mean that the Canadian victims bill of rights would prevail over other federal statutes, with the exception of the Constitution Act, which includes the Charter of Rights and other quasi-constitutional statutes within our legal system, such as the Official Languages Act, the Privacy Act, and, of course, the Canadian Human Rights Act.

What does this bill do? It effectively reintroduces Bill C-71 from the previous Parliament, which our Conservative government introduced, and applies the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights to the military justice system. In particular, it provides for four key rights for victims: the right to information, the right to protection, the right to participation, and the right to restitution.

Many Canadians, whether they serve in the Canadian forces or not, often find the criminal justice system intimidating and confusing, and find it challenging to get information about the case being made about the crime perpetrated against them. The right to information is about their right to have information in the general sense of how the system works, and also specifically regarding their case so they know about its progress. It is also to know information about the investigation, and the prosecution and sentencing of the person who perpetrated the act against them.

Whether it comes to the criminal justice system or the military justice system, the second right is the right to protection. This is to ensure that victim safety and security is protected. Whether that is by having their identity protected from public disclosure or using other measures that would allow for their protection, we believe this is exceptionally important.

I do see that my time is running short, so I will not have a full opportunity to talk about the right to participation and right to restitution. However, I will say that those of us on the Conservative benches will always stand for the victims of crime. We will defend the victims of crime and ensure that they have a place in both our criminal justice and military justice systems so that their voices are heard. We will stand with victims.

● (1800)

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I often find when these discussions come up that the argument that we will stand for victims is used as a battering ram against Liberals' points of view. Liberals stand up for victims, and that is why we brought forth this bill. We also believe that we try to work to avoid victimization. Obviously, we have to stand with victims, but whenever we work to avoid victimization and say let us not have victims, we run into a roadblock.

I would ask my colleague across the aisle why Conservatives are against avoiding crime. Why are they against the work we do toward avoiding crime and always come back to saying, even when we stand with victims, as in this bill, that we do not stand with victims? Clearly we do, yet we are battered by the other side.

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, Conservatives, of course, support avoiding crime. That is why we believe in investing in our criminal justice system, investing in law enforcement and ensuring that our law enforcement agencies have the tools to prevent crime. The member says that somehow the Conservatives are throwing up roadblocks to preventing crime. It is quite the contrary.

What I want to reiterate is that where the Liberals are failing to protect victims was on full view over the last two weeks. It was in full view as they defended a convicted killer, Chris Garnier, receiving veterans benefits and continuing to defend the transfer of Terri-Lynne McClintic, convicted of first degree murder, to a healing lodge where children are present. That is where the Liberals have failed to stand with victims.

Conservatives will be supporting this piece of legislation, because it builds on the good work the Conservative government undertook during our 10 years in office.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a matter of misplaced priorities. As I sat through this debate today, I heard members on the government side stand and say that they are defending victims, yet as an example of what my hon. colleague said, in the last couple of weeks, we have dealt with the Christopher Garnier situation and the Tori Stafford situation, where her killer is, effectively, in a minimum-security prison. What is interesting is how that relates to Bill C-71, currently in the Senate, the new Liberal gun registry and the contrast and hypocrisy with respect to Bill C-75, summary convictions. I know that my hon. colleague listed just a few of what those summary convictions are, but it speaks to the essence of the fact that the government has a judicial backlog, and its answer to that backlog of court cases is to reduce these sentences to summary convictions.

Does my hon. colleague not share the same hypocrisy Canadians are seeing with respect to the pieces of legislation and how hypocritical and contrary they are to each other in the overall Liberal narrative?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, my friend from Barrie—Innisfil is absolutely right. It is a system of misplaced priorities for the Liberals. They will throw up additional roadblocks and rules for law-abiding Canadians but then reduce sentences and change them to summary convictions for some serious crimes. It is wrong, and Canadians see through it. Canadians see through it, because they know what the Liberals are doing. They know where they are putting their priorities.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the arguments the Conservatives are spending their time on this afternoon are interesting.

We know that the legislation itself would enshrine victims rights. We have a Liberal government enshrining victims rights. I have news for the member across the way. All members of this chamber are sympathetic and extend sympathies to all victims of crime. Why would Conservatives try to imply that only the Conservative Party of Canada seems to be concerned about victims rights, when it is just not true?

● (1805)

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I would be curious to know from the member for Winnipeg North if he would have placed himself in a different position back in 2014, when he and his party, together with the NDP, delayed the passage of the Victims Bill of Rights by filibustering it on April 9, on May 27, on June 3, on June 6, on June 13 and again on June 20, at second reading alone. Does the member feel no shame for delaying the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights in 2014 when it was put before the House by the former Conservative government?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Madam Speaker, after asking my first question in the House and giving my first member's statement, I will now be giving my first 10-minute or so speech in the House of Commons. It is important to me to quickly break the ice.

First, it is an honour to be able to represent my constituents in Chicoutimi—Le Fjord as we study Bill C-77, an act to amend the National Defence Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts. As we know, the Bagotville military base is in Chicoutimi—Le Fjord. As part of Air Command, it is one of two bases housing the CF-18s in Canada. For those like me who are interested in history, I will mention that the Bagotville military base was established in 1942 to protect Alcan's infrastructure in the Saguenay, the aluminum plants that were part of the war effort during World War II. I would also like to mention that, at present, we are still paying a 10% tax on aluminum. This base continues to be one of the largest employers in Saguenay and houses 3 Wing Bagotville. It is one of the major pillars of the Saguenay economy, along with aluminum, lumber and agriculture. It is even more important to remember this today because aluminum, lumber and supply management were sacrificed in part last night.

I always enjoy meeting our troops. They are people of honour and integrity. They are leaders. They stand by one another. They protect one another. They all want equal treatment. I also enjoy meeting our valiant veterans. They always have good stories to tell. Unfortunately, they often have trouble getting the government to respect their rights. I talk to a lot of veterans who tell me about their deployments and the problems they run into when they return. Every time they tell the government what they need, the government does not seem that interested.

One of my greatest hopes is for the base to keep getting better. I would like to see proper military aircraft there, not the old, broken-down Australian planes the Liberals want to replace our CF-18s with. Our people in uniform deserve better. I have talked to some of them. The Australian planes are even older than the CF-18s at the Bagotville base. People are wondering what plans the government has to get them up to snuff.

Let me get back to the matter at hand, Bill C-77. Make no mistake, this bill is very similar to Bill C-71 that the previous Conservative government wanted to bring in during the 41st Parliament. That bill was introduced in June 2015, but it did not get as far as second reading.

● (1810)

Much like Bill C-77, we wanted to make changes to the military justice system. Specifically, we wanted to bring Canada's military justice system in line with the Criminal Code. Some of the most important changes we were planning to make were as follows: adding victims' rights the National Defence Act, limiting summary trials to six months and clarifying which cases would be eligible for a summary trial. From what I understand, Bill C-77 seeks to achieve the same objectives.

One has to wonder why the Liberal government waited so long to introduce this bill. The Liberals keep saying that they care about our veterans, that they are sympathetic to our solders and so on. It is obvious that the Conservatives will always put the rights of victims of crime ahead of the the rights of criminals, and we will make sure that victims have a voice in our justice system.

Need I remind members of the House that it was us, the Conservatives, who brought in the victims bill of rights? In fact, it was the senator from Quebec who represents LaSalle who made the victims bill of rights possible. Of course we are in favour of incorporating the victims bill of rights into the military justice system. That is precisely why we introduced Bill C-71 three years earlier. It was such a long time ago—I was still a coach at the time—but that is fine, we cannot fault our colleagues across the way for copying our work because we know full well that adding the victims bill of rights to the military justice system is the right thing to do for our country.

The leader of the official opposition and member for Regina—Qu'Appelle and the Conservatives will always stand behind victims of crime. It is important to us that Bill C-77 pass this first important stage and get to committee so that we can go over it in greater detail. It will be a pleasure to discuss this bill clause by clause with my colleagues opposite to make it the best it can be for our armed forces and the military justice system.

We are definitely going to discuss equality. Discipline demands consistency and continuity. They are the very foundation of people's trust in others and in the system. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces should not be subjected to discrimination based on race, gender, creed or culture. It is crucial that no soldier lose trust in their superior officer. Trust is hard to win and easy to lose. Whether positive or negative, discrimination undermines the bond of trust.

This will also be my first time analyzing a bill in detail in committee, so I will be adding another string to my bow as a new MP. I may get a chance to submit amendments and seek my colleagues' co-operation in getting them approved.

● (1815)

[*English*]

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Madam Speaker, from what I am hearing from the discussions on this piece of legislation, it seems like we could all agree that victims' rights are particularly important. This piece of legislation balances civil rights and the rights within our military. It enshrines victims' rights within the National Defence Act.

My hon. colleague spoke about wanting to get it to committee, to study it at committee, and to be able to provide some possible amendments when it gets to committee. Would my hon. colleague not agree that we should move forward with this and get it to committee?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Speaker, we must first take the time to do a proper analysis of this bill and to discuss it with our colleagues. I am still learning about that. We do not want to feel pressured all the time. We must take the time to do a proper analysis in order to do what is best for everyone.

[*English*]

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to welcome my hon. colleague for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

[*Translation*]

I congratulate him on his recent election to the House of Commons.

During his election campaign, did his constituents talk about the importance of standing up for victims of crime?

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Speaker, that is a very good question. We need not look very far for the answer.

We need only think of the case of Christopher Garnier, a criminal who is receiving benefits and was never in the military. In my riding, people find it difficult to accept that. We are still not getting an answer when we ask the government if it is going to stop his benefits. We certainly do hear people talking about it. I hope that these cases we are constantly hearing about do not become a common occurrence.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord for his first speech in the House. It was very interesting and very well documented.

My colleague spoke about the Bagotville base, an air force base, and how important it is to his riding. Could he tell us a little more about that?

Mr. Richard Martel: Madam Speaker, it is the third largest employer in the city of Saguenay, so obviously, it is a very important community. CFB Bagotville is vital to our region. We in Chicoutimi are proud to have this military base located in Saguenay, because we know it helps protect Canada's extremely vast territory. We often have discussions with military personnel regarding our fleet of CF-18s, which need to be replaced, as there is no guarantee that we will be able to use them until 2025.

● (1820)

[*English*]

BILL C-77—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I remember the last time I had to do this we were able to find a way forward, and I am hoping that again we will be able to find a way forward. If not, I have a responsibility to advance legislation.

An agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-77, an act to amend the National Defence Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

Government Orders

DIVORCE ACT

BILL C-78—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, while I am on my feet, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-78, an act to amend the Divorce Act, the Family Orders and Agreements Enforcement Assistance Act and the Garnishment, Attachment and Pension Diversion Act and to make consequential amendments to another act.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

* * *

MULTILATERAL INSTRUMENT IN RESPECT OF TAX CONVENTIONS ACT

BILL C-82—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is unfortunate because I know we can find a way, but an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-82, an act to implement a multilateral convention to implement tax treaty related measures to prevent base erosion and profit shifting.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-77, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-77 today. I am especially honoured to do so following my colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord's first speech in the House. We are all very proud of him. He was just elected with 53% of the popular vote. Compare that to our party's fourth-place finish three years ago. These things are worth remembering.

Bill C-77 is about reforming the military justice system. During my brief remarks, I will remind the House that this bill is essentially the same as Bill C-71, which we introduced when we were in government. It speaks to an issue that arouses tremendous compassion in everyone on both sides of the House.

Thousands of Canadians serve their country as members of the Canadian Armed Forces' army, navy and air force. We are all very grateful to these men. Although CFB Valcartier is not in my riding—that is an honour belonging to my colleague from Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, who represents the folks at Valcartier very well—several hundred of the base's 6,000 soldiers do live in my riding.

Fall is here and in six weeks, on November 11, we will be commemorating Remembrance Day. This year will be special as we mark the 100th anniversary of the armistice of 1918. As hon. members know, on the 11th day of the 11th month at the 11th hour, the First World War was to end. Unfortunately, other conflicts followed. Let us commemorate the thousands of Canadians who gave their lives so that we may live in freedom. Let us always remember the extraordinary sacrifices that these young men and women made during the different conflicts, especially during the First World War and the Second World War.

I have the extraordinary privilege of coming from a family that served its country. My father served during the campaign in Italy, among others, for the French Army under the command of Marshal Juin during the Second World War. My maternal grandfather, Paul Ponzelli, served in the First World War. He was in the French army and fought in the battle of Verdun, among others. I would also like to salute the people at the Consulate General of France in Quebec City, who are currently preparing a special commemoration for November 11. My mother will take part in this tribute being held six weeks from now.

Bill C-77 proposes reforms to the military justice system, which, naturally, is a delicate subject. Our men and women in uniform serve their country, but men being men and women being women, reprehensible behaviour can sometimes happen. This is why we have a military justice system. Canadians who put on the uniform accept that this uniform comes with responsibilities. Cases of reprehensible behaviour must be considered in the context of military action, because when these soldiers put on the uniform and carry a weapon, they can be sent to a combat theatre. The enemy will always be an enemy, which means that a solder may commit an act that would be considered criminal in the civilian world, but heroic in the military world. This is why the military justice system is different from the civilian system. Of course, this does not mean that soldiers should not have a dignified and honourable conduct in civilian life.

When we were in government, we introduced Bill C-71, which would have amended the military justice system. Some aspects of Bill C-71 are similar to our bill, such as enshrining victims' rights in the National Defence Act, imposing a six-month limitation period for summary trials and stipulating which cases should be handled in summary trial. These are the parts of the bill we agree with. I would like to point out that this bill was drafted with the assistance of our government's former justice ministers, namely the hon. Peter MacKay, the hon. Jason Kenney, and the hon. member for Niagara Falls, who is still serving his constituents in the House of Commons.

● (1825)

We also have some concerns about the fact that justice will likely be different for some people than for others. It is important to remember that there is a reason why justice is blind. Portrayals of Themis show what we want from a justice system. She is often portrayed with her eyes blindfolded, a sword in one hand and the scales of justice in the other. The sword is for punishing those who commit reprehensible acts and the scales are to ensure that everyone's rights are respected.

It is important to note that, in this allegorical personification of justice, Themis with her eyes covered, justice is blind. People must be judged based on their actions, not on who they are as a person. Some aspects of the legislation must be reviewed. For us, it is important to ensure that people are being judged based on their actions, and not on who they are, what they represent or embody, or their very nature even. We have to be careful about that. That is why the bill will be examined in committee by my colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord and others. It is important to remember that, as parliamentarians, we do indeed have the right to debate bills here.

I participated in all of today's debates and I was surprised to hear some of my government colleagues criticize us for rising to speak to this bill. Need I remind the government that this bill, which is almost a carbon copy of what we produced three years ago, was only introduced after three years by the Liberals? It is not because there are seven, eight, ten or twelve members who want to speak and debate lasts for one, two or three days that members will take offence and start getting annoyed. We must remember that our first duty here, in the House of Commons, is to express ourselves, as we are doing, to the extent possible and, above all, within the allotted time frame.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member will have three minutes the next time this matter is debated in the House as well as five minutes for questions and comments. He will therefore have a great deal of time to debate this further.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, back on April 27, I asked the Liberal government to explain why it was inflicting a carbon tax upon my province, the Saskatchewan families, without any consultation or approval and why it was ignoring Saskatchewan's successful emissions reduction plan. The Liberals have revealed that they are completely unwilling to consider any climate change strategy other than their own. Such a policy is incredibly misguided because it fails to consider that there are alternatives to a carbon tax in the fight against climate change.

Saskatchewan's plan to reduce carbon emissions and fight against the climate change is entitled "Prairie Resilience: A Made-in-Saskatchewan Climate Change Strategy". It is a strategy that is tailored to address the specific needs of Saskatchewan's economy. It is not a one-size-fits-all plan, which has been opposed by the Liberals in Ottawa without any consideration for the unique circumstances that the different provinces and territories face.

As of January 1, 2019, this plan will come into force and provide a cost-effective, meaningful and resilient approach to lowering Saskatchewan's greenhouse gas emissions. As part of the prairie resilience plan, policies that have been developed by the Government of Saskatchewan to combat climate change are broad and also diverse. These policy areas include, but are not limited to, natural systems, physical infrastructure, economic sustainability and community preparedness. Most important, though, the prairie resilience plan is one which responds, in a comprehensive sector-by-sector manner, to the needs of the people of Saskatchewan. It is not an arbitrarily imposed carbon tax like the one that the Liberal government is proposing to force upon every province and territory.

Unlike the Liberal carbon tax, the prairie resilience plan will tackle climate change, while at the same time protect the jobs and the livelihoods of the hard-working people in my province. Why then, does the Liberal government continue to threaten provinces such as mine with a job-killing and inefficient carbon tax?

The federal environment minister has previously stated in news conferences that she recognizes the need to work with provinces in order to address the pressing challenges that climate change poses for all Canadians. If the environment minister truly believes in that statement, why is her government withholding $62 million in infrastructure funding to support Saskatchewan's efforts to fight climate change and to reduce carbon emissions? This funding would support 11 clean energy projects in Saskatchewan, with an estimated potential to remove 188 million tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Again, why are the minister and her government withholding $62 million in infrastructure funding to support my province?

● (1830)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin my prepared statement, I would like to point out that one of the arguments that unpin what I just heard was a suggestion that we are forcing something onto the provinces. In fact, we have been clear from the very beginning that we are working with the provinces and territories that do come forward with a responsible plan of their own. I will note in particular that the plan in Nova Scotia may be very different from the plan in Quebec, or Alberta and British Columbia.

We are taking action on the environment and the economy in ways that will move both forward. This is what Canadians asked in 2015 when they elected our government, and it is the plan we are implementing. We know that putting a price on pollution is widely recognized as the most efficient and transparent way of reducing greenhouse gas pollution. It also helps create a sustainable clean growth economy. Pollution already has a significant cost today, such as the effects of smog, floods and wildfires. Putting a price on pollution lets everyone see the cost so we can do something about it. Unlike the Conservative Party, whose plan is to make pollution free again, we are making life more expensive for polluters and more affordable for Canadians.

There is evidence that pricing pollution and economic growth do go together. If I look at the example of British Columbia, I see that the price on pollution helped it reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and, at the same time, the provincial economy grew faster than the rest of Canada's. B.C.'s growing clean-tech sector now brings in an estimated $1.7 billion in annual revenue.

Across the world, industries are turning to cleaner and more sustainable options. Canada must not, and will not, be left behind. Pricing pollution provides incentives to reduce energy use through conservation and efficiency measures while also driving innovation that will give Canada an edge in the clean growth economy. This is going to make Canada's businesses more innovative and profitable and create more jobs from coast to coast to coast.

The pan-Canadian approach to pricing pollution gives provinces and territories the flexibility to establish a system that best suits their circumstances. Revenues raised from those jurisdictions—and I know this is important to the people of Saskatchewan—remain in the jurisdiction of origin. Even Stephen Harper's former director of policy has said that this policy will leave Canadian families better off than they are today.

Our plan to put a price on pollution will help protect the environment, grow the economy and put more money in the pockets of Canadians, including the constituents of the member opposite. The cost of inaction, quite frankly, is greater than the cost of addressing the problem. We know that by 2020, the anticipated cost of climate change to the economy will exceed $5 billion. We need to do something about this.

On the flipside of the same issue, the challenges posed by climate change create a significant opportunity for economic growth. If we demonstrate the political will to fight pollution, we are going to create jobs at the same time. We can expect to trigger economic growth and enhance environmental and social outcomes through strategic investments in the green economy, in public transit, and protecting nature as well as our oceans.

In 2015, Canadians made their voices heard. We are a country and a people who care very deeply about the environment. Our government was elected on a commitment to protect the environment and grow the economy at the same time, and just because the Conservatives could not do either, does not mean we will not do both.

● (1835)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, prairie resilience is the Saskatchewan plan. The Liberals have still not told me why Saskatchewan is not getting the $62 million in infrastructure funding to support our province's right to fight climate change. The people of Saskatchewan, in a poll, almost unanimously agreed with the premier, Scott Moe, in his fight against the federal government's coming down, top down, on the province in its fight against climate change.

We want to know why we have not received the $62 million. The whole caucus was just in Saskatoon. They heard loudly and clearly what people in Saskatchewan are upset about. We are taking this right to the Supreme Court, and now we are going to be joined by provinces like Ontario, and maybe even New Brunswick, which just last week elected a Conservative government. Whether they are elected or not depends on the Liberal government trying to make back deals. Saskatchewan was the only province to stand up. We have been followed now by Ontario, and shortly by New Brunswick.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, we are happy to work with provinces and territories that are willing to be responsible and put forward a plan would have a meaningful impact on reducing pollution. To date, we have not received a signal that the Province of Saskatchewan is willing to join the pan-Canadian framework, which would make it eligible for certain funding options to help grow the green economy and fight pollution at the same time.

To be clear, we know that a price on pollution will put more money into the pockets of Saskatchewanians than not addressing the problem at all. We know it will create jobs. I note in particular the support it has from industry, from companies like Suncor, Cenovus, Rio Tinto, Tembec, Loblaws, Desjardins and G.E. We know that environmental NGOs support this. Even Stephen Harper's former director of policy supports this on the basis that it is going to put more money in the pockets of middle-class families.

We are moving forward with a plan and will only be required to implement the framework where provinces abdicate their responsibility to take seriously the threats posed to the environment.

[*Translation*]

JUSTICE

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to take a moment to wish the best of luck to all the candidates running in today's elections in the beautiful region of Quebec.

For over two years, Canada has faced an unprecedented opioid crisis that has taken nearly 3,000 lives so far, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada. I have asked many questions, but I have not received many answers.

I know that the Minister of Justice has previously said she is open to the possibility of decriminalizing all drugs in Canada, which I think is a completely senseless idea. It would mean that the Liberal government would be legalizing often deadly drugs, like cocaine, heroin and crack. How can a government even consider such an irresponsible idea and make a serious crisis even worse?

In big cities such as Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, deaths from cocaine and crack are reported on TV every weekend. More and more people are dying from using these drugs. Thinking about decriminalizing them is irresponsible.

I struggle to understand why, at a time when Canada is already facing a crisis of this magnitude, the Liberal government would consider decriminalizing something that is so bad for people's health. I think we need to focus on rehabilitation and giving more money to communities so these people can get support. People with addiction issues often have a tough life.

I have a question for my Liberal friends: how can you be open to such an irresponsible idea and exacerbate an already tragic situation by decriminalizing all forms of drugs, especially hard drugs? To me, this idea is utterly senseless.

● (1840)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member to address the Chair and not the government directly using "you".

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me begin by thanking the hon. member for her question. I hope no one will mind if I give my response in English.

[*English*]

Thank you for the opportunity to address the concerns raised by the member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix on the very serious issue of the decriminalization of drugs.

Our government is deeply concerned about the worsening opioid crisis in our country. We have responded by making significant new investments, enacting new legislation and fast-tracking certain regulatory actions.

We are committed to an approach to drug policy that respects evidence-based decision-making, not decision-based evidence-making. While we are aware that decriminalization seems to be working in certain other jurisdictions, further study is required to determine if such an approach is workable here in Canada, because the circumstances here are, in fact, different.

To be clear, and for the benefit of my colleagues present tonight, our government is not looking at decriminalizing or legalizing all drugs. It is very important that we keep working toward our common goals and that we keep talking about any and all evidence-based responses that could help reverse the trend of the opioid crisis in Canada. This includes helping Canadians obtain greater access to medically proven treatments that actually help overcome problematic substance abuse.

To this end, earlier this spring, our government removed regulatory barriers to accessing diacetylmorphine, also know as prescription grade heroin, and methadone for the treatment of opioid use disorder. These changes are going to help patients access pharmaceutical grade heroin for treatment outside a hospital setting, such as in substance use disorder clinics. This will allow patients to balance their daily responsibilities with their treatment. It will also allow health care practitioners to prescribe and administer methadone treatment without needing to apply for an exemption from the federal law.

We also have put in place a mechanism to import foreign authorized drugs not approved in Canada to address urgent public health needs. Drugs used to treat opioid use disorder were among the very first to be added to the importation list of drugs for an urgent public health need.

Treatment facilitated through this new mechanism is going to help people with substance use disorders reduce risks associated with illegal drugs and lead more stable lives. Despite these regulatory changes, any drug used for treatment that is also a controlled substance would continue to be subject to all the requirements of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

The government is going to continue to provide Canadians with the most up-to-date and evidence-based information to enable them to make healthy choices and maintain healthy lifestyles. The current opioid crisis has had devastating impacts on Canadians and the communities in which we live.

We know that this is an incredibly complex situation that cannot be solved by any one organization or level of government acting alone. We remain committed to working with partners across the entire country, using all available methods, to address this severe public health crisis. We also remain open to hearing from domestic and international experts about health-based approaches to preventing and treating problematic substance use, and we continue our efforts in a way that is comprehensive, compassionate and evidence-based.

● (1845)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Madam Speaker, in response to my colleague across the aisle, I would say that words are all well and good, and evidence-based decision-making is all well and good, but marijuana will be legal in two weeks' time.

A great many people gave evidence before the committees to talk about all this. My colleague opposite did not listen to them. There is no clear evidence to justify legalizing marijuana, and yet, legalization will go ahead in two weeks, even though no one is ready. There has been no structure. The government drafted a bill and then dumped it all onto the provinces, which are left facing a huge problem.

Are they going to do the same thing with opioids and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, the legalization of cannabis is moving forward because the system we have today, frankly, has not been working. The measures we are putting in place will make it harder for children to access marijuana, which is something we can all agree is good, and divert profits away from organized crime, which we can all agree on as well.

With respect to the question put on notice to discuss this evening, I would reiterate that our government is not seeking to legalize or decriminalize all other drugs. As I mentioned, we heard from stakeholders across Canada that barriers exist to accessing pharmaceutical grade heroin and methadone as treatment options for people who need them to be well. That is why the Government of Canada removed barriers to accessing prescription drugs and methadone for the treatment of opioid use disorder, giving Canadians greater access to a wider array of treatment options. We are moving forward with evidence-based policy, and it is going to save lives.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:48 p.m.)

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